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Honoré de Balzac

Honoré de Balzac

PRIVATE LIFE

VOLUME X

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NO. 561

AT FÉLICITÉ'S

"Will you have a cigarette? Oh! I am constantly forgetting that you never smoke. Such purity as yours is so rare! It seems that no hand save that of an Eve fresh from the hands of God is fit to caress the satin-like down upon your cheeks."

Calyste blushed and took his place upon a stool; he did not see the profound emotion that made Camille blush.

ETCHINGS BY
BOILOT DEBLOIS DELTEIL
AND LE SUEUR
AFTER PAINTINGS BY
MOREAU

BÉATRIX
BY
GEORGE BURNHAM IVES

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

BY

Honoré de Balzac

NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME
COMPLETELY TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

VOLUME
XXI

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BÉATRIX

TO SARAH

In fine weather, on the shores of the Mediterranean, where the fair empire of your name once extended, sometimes the sea discloses, beneath its transparent waters, a marine flower, a veritable masterpiece of nature; its lace-like filaments, tinged with purple, bistre, violet, pink or gold, the freshness of its waving filigree, its velvety tissue, all wither and fade as soon as human curiosity draws it forth and exposes it upon the shore to the sun's rays. In like manner, the sunshine of publicity would offend your pious modesty. And so, in dedicating this book to you, I must withhold a name that certainly would be its pride; but, in consideration of this demi-silence, your superb hands perhaps may bless it, your sublime brow may bend dreamily over it, your eyes, filled with maternal love, may smile upon it, for you will be present, though veiled. Like that pearl of the marine flora, you will remain on the smooth, fine, white sand where your lovely life blooms and expands, hidden by waves that are transparent only for a few friendly and discreet eyes.

I would have liked to lay at your feet a work in harmony with your perfections; but, although that was impossible, I am able, as a consolation, to gratify one of your instincts by offering you something to protect.

DE BALZAC.

PART FIRST

THE CHARACTERS

*

France, notably in the province of Bretagne, possesses, to this day, some towns that have remained entirely outside the social movement that gives the nineteenth century its distinctive physiognomy. Being without swift and regular means of communication with Paris, and connected only by wretched roads with the sub-prefecture or the chief town of the department, these places hear or watch the new civilization pass like the scenes of a play, they marvel at it without applauding; and, whether because they fear it or because they look contemptuously upon it, they are faithful to the old customs, whose stamp has clung to them. The man who should care to travel about as a moral archæologist, and to study men instead of rocks, might find a reflection of the age of Louis XV. in some village of Provence, of the age of Louis XIV. in the heart of Poitou, and of still more ancient periods in the heart of Bretagne. Most of these towns have fallen from some pinnacle of splendor of which historians do not speak, being more intent upon

facts and dates than manners, but the memory of which still lives in the memory—as in Bretagne, where the national character precludes forgetfulness of matters concerning the province. Many of these towns have been the capital of some little feudal state, a county or duchy conquered by the crown, or divided among the heirs in default of a male line. Compelled to abandon their active life, these heads became arms. The arm, deprived of nourishment, dries up and withers. During the last thirty years, however, these portraits of bygone ages are beginning to be effaced and are becoming rare. By working for the masses, modern industrial appliances are fast supplanting the creations of old-fashioned skill, whose labors concerned the consumer as well as the artisan individually. We have *products* now, we no longer have *works*. The monumental structures count for half in these retrospective phenomena. But from the standpoint of modern industry, the stone quarries, the saltpetre mines and the cotton factories are monumental structures. A few years more and these cities of long ago will be transformed and will be heard of no more except in literary iconography of this sort.

One of the towns in which the physiognomy of feudal times is most correctly preserved is Guérande. The name alone will awaken countless memories in the minds of painters, artists, thinkers, who may have traveled to that part of the coast where this magnificent gem of feudality is situated, commanding such a superb view of the sea-beaches and the

dunes occupying, as it were, the apex of a triangle, the two other corners of which are formed by two other no less interesting gems, Le Croisic and the village of Batz. After Guérande, Vitré in the centre of Bretagne and Avignon in the South are the only places that preserve their Middle Ages atmosphere intact in the midst of our epoch. To this day, Guérande is surrounded by its strong walls; its great canals are still full of water, its battlements are entire, its loopholes are not blocked up with shrubs, the ivy has not thrown a mantle about its square or round towers. It has three gates at which the portcullis rings can be seen, and you can enter only by passing over an iron-bound wooden drawbridge which is no longer raised, but which can be raised at need. The mayor was blamed, in 1820, for planting poplars along the canals to shade the pathway. The answer was that, a hundred years before, the long and attractive esplanade of the fortifications on the sand dune side, which seem to have been completed only yesterday, had been converted into a mall shaded with elm trees, beneath which the inhabitants enjoyed themselves exceedingly. The houses have undergone no change, have grown no larger or smaller. Not one of them has felt the architect's hammer upon its front or the painter's brush, or staggered under the weight of an additional story. They all retain their primitive character. Some rest upon wooden pillars forming galleries beneath which people pass to and fro, and whose floor planks bend but do not break. The

shopkeepers' houses are small and low, and their façades are covered with slates nailed on. Wood, now much decayed, enters largely into the sculptures about the windows, which protrude also on the sides above the pillars in grotesque faces and lengthen out at the corners into shapes of fantastic beasts, giving voice to the leading idea of art in those days, which was to give life to dead nature. These venerable objects, which resist assaults of all sorts, offer to painters the brown tones and indistinct shapes which appeal to their brushes. The streets are what they were four hundred years ago. But, as they are no longer full of people, as the social movement is less active there, a traveler interested in examining this town, beautiful as a complete suit of ancient armor, may follow, not without a touch of melancholy, an almost deserted street where the windows are stopped up with clay, to escape the window tax. This street ends at a disused postern in a wall of solid masonry, above which grows a clump of trees laid out with exquisite taste by the hands of Breton nature, one of the most lavish and most luxuriant gardeners in France. A painter, a poet, will be content to sit and enjoy the profound silence that reigns under the arch, still far from old, of this postern, whither the life of the placid city sends no sound, where the fertile country appears in all its magnificence through the loopholes once occupied by archers and crossbowmen, which now resemble windows in a belvedere. It is impossible to walk thereabout without thinking at every step of the manners

and the customs of the past; every stone speaks to you of them; in short, the ideas of the Middle Ages still prevail there in the superstitious stage. If by chance a gendarme passes with a laced hat, his presence is an anachronism against which your mind protests; but nothing is more rare than to meet a human creature or a thing belonging to the present. There is even very little wearing apparel of the present day; the little that the inhabitants do permit themselves to wear, adapts itself in some sort to their unchanging manners, their stationary physiognomy. The public square is full of Breton costumes which artists come there to sketch, and which are marvelously effective. The whiteness of the blouses worn by the *paludiers*, the name given to the men who gather salt in the salt marshes, forms a striking contrast to the blue and brown garments of the *peasants*, and the unique and piously preserved headdresses of the women. These two classes, as also that of the sailors in their jackets and little glazed hats, are as distinct from each other as the different castes in India, and they still recognize the differences in rank that separate the bourgeoisie, the nobility and the clergy. There the dividing lines are still well marked; the revolutionary plane found the masses too uneven and too hard for it to act upon; it would have been dented thereon, if not broken. The character of immutability with which nature has endowed its zoölogical species is found there among human beings. In a word, even after the Revolution of 1830,

Guérande is still a community apart, essentially Breton, fervently Catholic, silent and self-contained, with only a grudging welcome for new ideas.

Its geographical position explains this phenomenon. This attractive town overlooks extensive salt marshes, whose product is known throughout Bretagne as Guérande salt, and to it many Bretons ascribe the excellence of their butter and their sardines. It is connected with modern France by only two roads, the one that leads to Savenay, the chief town of the arrondissement to which it belongs, and on to Saint-Nazaire; and the one that leads to Vannes and connects it with the Morbihan. The departmental road establishes communication by land and Saint-Nazaire by sea, with Nantes. The land road is seldom used except by government officials. The most direct and most frequented route is that by Saint-Nazaire. Between that town and Guérande, there is a space of at least six leagues not served by the post, and for cause: there are not three passengers a year. Saint-Nazaire is separated from Paimbœuf by the mouth of the Loire, which is there four leagues wide. The river bar renders steamboat navigation extremely uncertain; and, as a fitting climax to the obstacles to travel, there was no landing-place in 1829 at Saint-Nazaire, and that part of the coast was adorned with slimy stones, reefs of granite, colossal rocks, which serve as natural fortifications to its picturesque church, and which formerly compelled travelers to jump down into the boats with their luggage when there was a

sea running, or, when the weather was fine, to wade across the reefs to the jetty which engineers were then building. These obstacles, ill-adapted to encourage travelers for pleasure, still exist for aught we know. In the first place, government is slow in its operations; and secondly, the people of that region, which stands out like a tooth on the map of France, between Saint-Nazaire, Batz and Le Croisic, readily adapt themselves to the difficulties which make the approaches to their territory so forbidding to strangers.

Cast aside into a corner of the continent, Guérande leads to nowhere, and no one comes thither. Happy at being ignored, it thinks only of itself. The enormous product of the salt marshes, which pay no less than a million to the treasury, is shipped from Le Croisic, the peninsular town, whose communication with Guérande is over shifting sand where the ruts made by day are effaced during the night, and by boats which are indispensable to cross the arm of the sea that has broken through the sand and serves as a harbor to Le Croisic. Thus this charming little town is the Herculaneum of feudal times, minus the winding-sheet of lava. It exists without living, it has no other reason for existence than that it has never been demolished.

If you come to Guérande by way of Le Croisic, after passing through the district of salt marshes, you will feel a thrill of keen emotion at the sight of those vast fortifications, still apparently quite new. The picturesqueness of its location and the simple

charm of its surroundings, if you come by way of Saint-Nazaire, are no less attractive. The country all about is enchantingly beautiful, the hedges are bright with flowers, honeysuckle, box, roses and lovely blossoms of all sorts. You would say it was an English garden designed by a great artist. This lovely, modest scene, so entirely unartificial, and as charming as a bunch of violets or lilies of the valley in a dense forest, has for its frame an African desert bordered by the ocean—a desert without a tree, without a blade of grass, without a bird, where, on sunshiny days, the *paludiers*, dressed in white and scattered here and there among the melancholy marshes where the salt is cultivated, remind one of Arabs in their long *burnous*. Thus Guérande, with its charming landscape, with its desert, bounded at the right by Le Croisic and at the left by the village of Batz, resembles nothing that travelers see elsewhere in France. These two strongly contrasted aspects of nature, united by the last reflection of feudal life, create an indescribable impression upon the imagination. The town produces the effect upon the mind that a sedative draught produces upon the body; it is as silent as Venice. There is no public conveyance save that of a carrier who takes travelers, freight and an occasional letter from Saint-Nazaire to Guérande and *vice versa*, in a springless wagon. Bernus the carrier was, in 1829, the factotum of this important community. He makes his trips when he chooses, the whole province knows him, he does everybody's

errands. The arrival of a carriage,—whether it contain some female passing through Guérande *en route* by land to Le Croisic, or an aged invalid or two on their way to take the sea baths,—which, among the cliffs of that peninsula, possess virtues superior to those at Boulogne, Dieppe and Les Sables—is a momentous event. The peasants come to the town on horseback, most of them bringing produce in their saddle-bags. They are brought thither, for the most part, like the *paludiers*, by the necessity of purchasing the trinkets specially affected by their caste, which are presented at all Breton betrothals, as well as the white linen or stuff for their costumes. Within a circuit of ten leagues Guérande is still Guérande, the illustrious city where the famous treaty was signed, the key of the coast; and the name still recalls, no less than that of Batz, a splendor vanished now in the darkness of the past. The trinkets, the stuff, the linen, the ribbon, the hats are made elsewhere, but they are of Guérande manufacture in the eyes of all the consumers. Every artist, aye, every bourgeois, who visits Guérande feels, like those who sojourn at Venice, a longing, soon forgotten, to end his days in peace and silence, walking in fine weather on the wall that surrounds the town from one gate to the other. Sometimes the image of the town returns and knocks at the temple of memory; it enters with its headdress of turrets, arranged in its girdle of walls; it spreads out its dress sown with lovely flowers, shakes the golden mantle of its dunes,

exhales the intoxicating odors of its pleasant, rough roads, bordered with nosegays tossed together by the hand of chance; it attracts your attention and calls to you like a divinely beautiful woman whom you have caught a glimpse of in some foreign country, and who has found a lodgment in a corner of your heart.

Close by the church at Guérande is a house which in the town, is what the town itself is in the province—an exact image of the past, the symbol of a great thing destroyed, a poem. This house belongs to the noblest family in the province, the Du Guaisnics, who, in the days of the Du Guesclins, were as superior to them in fortune and in antiquity as the Trojans were to the Romans. The *Guaisqlain*—also written formerly *Du Glaicquin*—which was transformed into Guesclin, were descendants of the Guaisnics. Old as the granite of Bretagne, the Guaisnics are neither Franks nor Gauls—they are Bretons, or, to speak more exactly, Celts. They must have been Druids long ago, have gathered the mistletoe of the sacred forests and sacrificed men upon the cromlechs. It is useless to say what they were. To-day that race, equal to the Rohans, although it has never deigned to assume princely rank, a race that was powerful before Hugues Capet's ancestors were ever heard of, a race absolutely free from all base alloy, possesses an income of about two thousand francs, with its house at Guérande and its little castle of Guaisnic. All the estates appertaining to the barony of Guaisnic, the

first in Bretagne, are mortgaged to the tenants and bring in about sixty thousand francs, despite the imperfect methods of cultivation. The Du Guaisnics still own their estates, by the way; but, as they cannot repay the capital placed in their hands two hundred years ago by the then tenants, they cannot touch the revenues. They are in the situation of the crown of France with its *engagistes* prior to 1789. Where and when will the barons find the million their farmers entrusted to them? Before 1789 the control of the fiefs dependent upon the castle of Guaisnic, which stood on the summit of a hill, was still worth fifty thousand francs; but the National Assembly passed a vote doing away with the feudal taxes collected by the nobles. Under these circumstances, this family, which is no longer of importance to anyone in France, would be a laughing stock at Paris; at Guérande it stands for all Bretagne. At Guérande, the Baron du Guaisnic is one of the great barons of France, one of those men above whom there is but a single man, the King of France, formerly chosen as their chief. To-day the name of Du Guaisnic, which is full of meaning from a Breton standpoint, and whose extraction is explained in *The Chouans*, or *Bretagne in 1799*, has undergone the change that disfigures the name of Du Guaisqlain. The tax-collector, like everybody else, writes Guénic.

At the end of a dark, damp, silent lane, formed by the gable ends of the adjacent houses, may be seen the arch of a low gate, just broad enough and high

enough to admit a mounted man, a circumstance that at once informs you that at the time that gateway was built, carriages did not exist. The arch, supported by two piers, is all of granite. The gate, made of oak rough-hewn like the bark of trees split for firewood, is thickly studded with enormous nails in geometrical designs. The keystone of the arch is hollowed out. It bears the escutcheon of the Les Guaisnics as sharp and clear as if the sculptor had just finished it. The shield would delight the heart of a student of heraldry by a simplicity of design that proves the pride and the antiquity of the family. It is as it was on the day that the Crusades in behalf of Christianity invented these symbols as a means of recognition; the Guaisnics have never quartered it; it is always like unto itself, like the crest of the House of France, which connoisseurs find centred or quartered in the arms of the oldest families. This is it, as you can see it still at Guérande: *gules, a hand, flesh-colored, with ermine wristband, grasping a sword in pale*, with this awe-inspiring word for a device: FAC! Is it not a grand and noble thing? The *tortil* of the baronial coronet surmounts this simple shield, on which the vertical lines, employed in sculpture to represent *gules*, or red, still stand prominently forth. The artist has given an indescribably proud and chivalric turn to the hand. With what nervous vigor it grasps the sword, which the family used only yesterday! In truth, if you should go to Guérande after reading this narrative, it would be impossible for you to restrain a thrill

when you see that escutcheon. Yes, the most radical Republican would be touched by the fidelity, the nobility, the grandeur that lie hidden at the end of that lane. The Du Guaisnics did well yesterday, they are ready to do well to-morrow. To do is the great word of chivalry. *You did well in battle,* was the common remark of the Constable, *par excellence,* that great Du Guesclin, who drove the English from France for a time.

The depth of the carving, preserved from the ravages of time by the broad margin due to the rounded projection of the arch, is in harmony with the moral depth of the device in the soul of the family. To him who knows the Du Guaisnics, this characteristic becomes profoundly touching.

Through the open gateway you can see a courtyard of considerable extent, at the right of which are the stables, at the left the kitchen. The mansion is of hewn stone from cellar to attic. The façade on the courtyard is furnished with a flight of steps with a double rail, the portico being covered with the remains of carvings worn away by time, although the eye of the antiquary can still distinguish the hand holding the sword in the centre of the principal pieces. Under this pretty porch, framed by carved mouldings broken here and there and polished in some places by long use, is a little box formerly occupied by a watchdog. The stone balusters are disjointed; grass and moss and a few tiny flowers are growing in the cracks and between the steps of the staircase, which the centuries have

displaced without depriving them of their solidity. The door must have been of an attractive design. As far as one can judge from what is left of it, it was the work of an artist reared in the great Venetian school of the thirteenth century. There is an indefinable mingling of the Byzantine and the Moorish. It is surmounted by a circular projection laden with flowers, a pink, yellow, brown or blue bouquet, according to the season. The studded oaken door opens into a vast hall, with another and a similar stoop at the other end, leading to the garden. This hall is in a marvelous state of preservation. Its wainscoting, waist-high, is of chestnut. The walls are covered with magnificent Spanish leather, enlivened by raised figures, but the gilding has crumbled and turned red. The ceiling is made of boards artistically joined, painted and gilded. The gold can hardly be distinguished; it is in the same state as that on the Cordovan leather, but you can still see a few red flowers and some green foliage. It is more than probable that a thorough cleansing would bring to light paintings similar to those that adorn the ceilings in Tristan's house at Tours, which would prove that these ceilings were renewed or restored in the reign of Louis XI. The fireplace of carved stone is an enormous affair, provided with enormous andirons of hammered iron of priceless workmanship. It would hold a load of wood. The furniture of the hall is all of oak and each piece has the family crest surmounting its back. There are three English guns, equally adapted for

hunting and for war, three swords, two gamebags, and the ordinary paraphernalia of the hunter and angler hanging upon nails against the wall.

At one side is a dining-room which communicates with the kitchen by a door in a little turret at the corner of the house. This turret corresponds to another at the other corner of the courtyard façade, in which there is a winding stairway leading to the two upper floors. The dining-room is hung with tapestry that dates back to the fourteenth century, as is proved by the style and spelling of the inscriptions placed on the scrolls under each figure; but as they are in the artless language of the *fabliaux* it is impossible to transcribe them to-day. These tapestries, which are very well preserved where the light has not had free access to them, are surrounded by bands of carved oak, black as ebony. The ceiling consists of projecting beams, each embellished with leaves of a different shape; the spaces between are covered with painted boards with garlands of flowers in gold upon a blue ground. Two old sideboards face each other. Upon their polished surfaces, which Mariotte, the cook, rubs faithfully with true Breton obstinacy, may be seen, as in 1200 when the kings were quite as poor as the Du Guaisnics in 1830, four old goblets, an old battered soup tureen and two saltcellars, all in silver; then there are quantities of pewter plates, quantities of tankards in blue and gray stoneware with arabesque designs and the Du Guaisnic arms, each with a hinged pewter lid.

The mantelpiece has been modernized. Its condition proves that the family has lived in this room since the last century. It is of carved stone in the style of the time of Louis XV., adorned with a mirror between two piers beaded and gilded. This antithesis, unheeded by the family, would vex the soul of a poet. In the centre of the shelf, which is covered with red velvet, is a tortoise-shell clock inlaid with copper, and on each side a silver candlestick of curious workmanship. A large square table with twisted legs stands in the centre of the room. The chairs are of turned wood, upholstered in tapestry. Upon a round table with a single leg, representing a vine, and standing in front of the window opening on the garden, is a lamp of an odd pattern. It consists of a common glass globe a little smaller than an ostrich egg, set up in a candlestick by means of a glass rod. From a hole in the top of the globe comes a flat wick coiled in a sort of copper reed like a tapeworm in a long-necked bottle, and this wick drinks up the nut oil contained in the globe. The window opening on the garden, like that which opens on the courtyard—and they occupy corresponding positions—has a stone framework, and hexagonal panes set in lead; the curtains, draped over baldaquins and furnished with huge tassels, are of an old red silk material, with a yellow tinge, formerly called *brocatelle* or little brocade.

On each floor of the house, and there are two, there are rooms corresponding to these two, and no others. The first serves as the habitation of the

head of the family. The second was formerly intended for the children. The guests were quartered in the rooms under the roof. The servants lived over the stables and the kitchen. The pointed roof, leaded at the angles, is pierced on both courtyard and garden sides by a magnificent ogive window rising almost as high as the peak, with slender, graceful consoles, the carving of which has been eaten into by the saline vapors of the atmosphere. Above the ornamental pediment of these windows with their four stone transoms, the weathercock of the nobility still creaks in the wind.

Let us not overlook one priceless detail, artless in the extreme, which is not without merit in the eyes of archæologists. The turret containing the winding stairway is at the corner of a high gable end in which there is no window. The staircase descends through a small ogive door to a sanded yard which separates the house from the boundary wall against which the stables are built. This turret is repeated on the garden side by another with five faces, terminating in a cupola which supports a little steeple, instead of wearing a pepper-box on its head like its sister. That is the way in which the accomplished architects varied the symmetry of their creation. At the first-floor level only, these turrets are connected by a stone gallery supported by objects like ships' figureheads with human faces. This exterior gallery is embellished with a balustrade of marvelous beauty and delicacy of workmanship. From the peak of the gable end, beneath which there is a

single oblong cross beam, depends a stone ornament representing a canopy like those that surmount the statues of saints in church doorways. The two turrets have each a pretty door with a pointed arch opening on the gallery. Such was the treatment by the architects of the thirteenth century of the cold, bare wall presented in our day by the cut-off corner of a house.

Can you not see a woman walking on that gallery in the morning and watching the sun over Guérande light up the golden sands and burnish the vast expanse of the sea? Do you not admire that wall with the flower-bedecked crest, and at its two angles two turrets, fluted as it were, one of them abruptly rounded off like a swallow's nest, and the other presenting its pretty door with the gothic arch, embellished with the hand holding a sword? The other gable of the Du Guaisnic mansion adjoins the next house. The harmony for which the masters of those days labored so zealously is preserved in the courtyard façade by the turret similar to the one containing the *screw-stair*—such was the name formerly given to a winding staircase—that is to say, the one that serves as a means of communication between the dining-room and kitchen; but it stops at the first floor, and its crown is a small open dome beneath which stands a black statue of Saint Calyste.

The garden is a luxurious affair for such an old place; it contains about half an acre and its walls are lined with *espaliers;* it is divided into square

beds of vegetables, bordered with fruit trees cut distaff-fashion and cared for by a male servant named Gasselin, who also attends to the horses. At the end of the garden is an arbor with a bench beneath it. In the centre is a sundial. The paths are sanded. The façade on the garden has no turret to correspond to that which rises at the corner of the gable end. It atones for this defect by a little spiral column extending from the ground to the roof, which was intended to bear the family banner in the old days, for it ends in a sort of large socket of rusty iron, about which some thin blades of grass are growing. This detail, in harmony with the remains of the carving, proves that the building was constructed by a Venetian architect. The graceful staff is like a signature, which betrays the Venetian hand and the chivalry and refinement of the thirteenth century. If there remained any doubt in that respect, the nature of the ornaments would put an end to it. The trefoils of the Du Guaisnic mansion have four branches instead of three. This difference points to the Venetian school as debased by its intercourse with the Orient, where the half-Moorish architects, caring little for the great Catholic idea, gave four leaves to the trefoil, while the Christian architects remained true to the Trinity. In this respect, the Venetian caprice was heretical.

If this building takes your imagination by surprise, you will wonder perhaps why such miracles of art are not imitated at the present day. To-day

the fine houses are sold and torn down to make room for streets. No one knows whether his own generation will continue in possession of the patrimonial mansion, where everyone goes in and out as at an inn; whereas formerly, in building a house to live in, a man was building, or supposed that he was, for a never-ending family. Hence the beauty of the houses. Faith in one's self performed prodigies as well as did faith in God.

As for the arrangement and furnishing of the upper floors, they can be imagined in accordance with the description of the ground floor, and in accordance with the characteristics and manners of the family. For fifty years past, the Du Guaisnics have never received a guest elsewhere than in the two rooms in which, as in the courtyard and the external accessories of the mansion, one breathed the spirit and the artless charm of ancient, noble Bretagne. Without the topographical description of the town, without this minute account of the house, the remarkable figures of the members of the family would have been less readily understood perhaps. So the frames should come before the portraits. It will be said that things have taken precedence of men. There are monuments that have a visible influence over the persons that live in the neighborhood. It is difficult to be irreligious in the shadow of a cathedral like that at Bourges. When the mind is reminded of its destiny at every turn by images, it is less easy to fail to act up to it. Such was the opinion of our ancestors, now

abandoned by a generation that knows no symbols or distinctions and changes its moral code every ten years. Do you not expect to find the Baron du Guaisnic with a sword in his hand, or is this all a falsehood?

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In 1836, at the time when this scene opens, in the early days of August, the Du Guénic family was composed of Monsieur and Madame du Guénic, of Mademoiselle du Guénic, the baron's older sister, and of an only son, twenty-one years of age, named Gaudebert-Calyste-Louis, in accordance with an old family custom. The father's name was Gaudebert-Calyste-Charles. Only the last baptismal name was ever varied. Saint Gaudebert and Saint Calyste were always to be the patron saints of the Du Guénics.

The Baron du Guénic had left Guérande when La Vendée and Bretagne took up arms, and had fought under Charette, Catelineau, La Rochejacquelein, D'Elbée, Bonchamps and the Prince de Loudon. Before setting out he sold all his property to his older sister, Mademoiselle Zéphirine du Guénic, with a gleam of foresight unique in revolutionary annals. After the death of all the heroes of the West, the baron, whom nothing short of a miracle had preserved from ending his days like them, did not submit to Napoléon. He continued in arms until 1802, in which year, after coming within a hair's breadth of allowing himself to be taken, he returned to Guérande, went from Guérande to Le Croisic, and made his way thence into Ireland, faithful to the Breton's hereditary hatred of England.

The people of Guérande pretended not to know of the baron's existence: for twenty years, not a single incautious word was uttered. Mademoiselle du Guénic collected the income and sent it to her brother by fishermen.

In 1813, Monsieur du Guénic returned to Guérande as quietly as if he had simply been to Nantes for the season. During his stay in Dublin, the old Breton, notwithstanding his fifty years, had fallen in love with a charming Irish girl, daughter of one of the noblest and most destitute families of that unhappy kingdom. Miss Fanny O'Brien was at that time one-and-twenty. The Baron du Guénic came to France to procure the papers necessary to his marriage, went back to Ireland to marry, and returned ten months later, at the beginning of 1814, with his wife, who presented him with Calyste on the very day that Louis XVIII. landed at Calais,—a fact which explains his name of Louis. The loyal old Breton was seventy-three at the time our story opens; but his long partisan warfare upon the Republic, his sufferings during five passages across the Channel on fishing boats, and his life at Dublin, had told heavily upon him; he looked to be more than a hundred years old. So it was that never, at any epoch, had a Du Guénic been more in harmony with the antique air of this structure, built in the days when there was a court at Guérande.

Monsieur du Guénic was a tall, straight, angular, nervous, spare old man. His oval face was furrowed with thousands of wrinkles which formed

arched fringes above his cheek bones and eyebrows, and made his face resemble the old men whom the pencils of Van Ostade, Rembrandt, Mieris and Gerard Dow were so fond of painting, and which need a magnifying-glass to be appreciated. His features were buried, as it were, under these numerous folds, due to his life in the open air, to the custom of scrutinizing the country closely in the bright sunlight, at dawn as well as at nightfall. Nevertheless, the observer could still detect the imperishable lines of the human face, which have something to say to the mind even when the eye can no longer see in them aught but a death's head. The unbroken contour of the face, the shape of the forehead, the serious lines, the thin nose, the structure of the skull which wounds alone can change, denoted unreflecting courage, boundless faith, unquestioning obedience, uncompromising fidelity, imperishable love. In him, the Breton granite was incarnate. The baron had no teeth. His lips, once red, now purple, being held in place only by the hard gums with which he ate the bread which his wife took care to soften by placing in a damp napkin—his lips were sunken, but the expression of his mouth was proud and threatening none the less. His chin seemed anxious to meet his nose, but the shape of the last-named organ, which was curved at the ridge, was a sufficient indication of his energy and Breton obstinacy. His skin, mottled with red blotches which could be seen through his wrinkles, denoted a full-blooded, violent disposition, well

adapted to endure the fatigue which had doubtless preserved the baron many a time from an apoplectic stroke. His head was crowned with hair as white as silver, which fell in curls about his shoulders. His face, extinct, as it were, in part, still lived by virtue of two bright black eyes, which gleamed from the depths of their dark orbits, and emitted the last flames of a generous, loyal heart. The eyebrows and lashes had fallen out. The skin had become hardened and could not smooth out its wrinkles. The difficulty of shaving compelled the old man to let his beard grow in the shape of a fan. A painter would have admired above everything, in this old Breton lion with the broad shoulders and muscular chest, the soldier's superb hands, hands such as Du Guesclin must have had—broad and thick and hairy; hands which had grasped the sword hilt, like Jeanne Darc, never to relax their hold until the day when the royal standard should wave in the Cathedral of Reims; hands which had often been torn by the thorny hedges in Le Bocage, which had handled the oar in the Marais to surprise the *Blues*, or in the open sea to facilitate the arrival of Georges Cadoudal; hands of the partisan, the gunner, the private soldier, the leader; hands now white, although the Bourbons of the elder branch were in exile; but, on looking closely at them, you would have seen some fresh marks indicating that the baron had lately joined Madame in La Vendée. To-day this fact may be avowed. Those hands were a living commentary on the noble device which no Du Guénic

had ever failed to justify: FAC! The brow attracted attention by reason of the yellow tinge about the temples, contrasting with the dark tone of the harsh, wrinkled, narrow forehead, which the falling out of the hair had increased in size sufficiently to impart greater majesty to the noble ruin. The face—it was a little sensual by the way, and how could it have been otherwise?—presented, like all the Breton faces grouped about the baron, a sort of savage appearance, a stolid calmness resembling the impassiveness of the Huron, an indefinable suggestion of insensibility, due perhaps to the absolute repose following excessive fatigue, which allows the animal part of us to appear by itself. Thought was rare. It seemed to require an effort, it had its seat in the heart rather than in the head, it resulted in facts rather than in ideas. But, upon watching this fine old man with unremitting attention, you would divine the mystery of this sincere opposition to the spirit of the time. He had ideas that were like a religion to him, inborn sentiments, so to speak, which exempted him from the necessity of meditation. His duty he had learned with his life. Institutions and the religion thought for him. It was for him and his, therefore, to reserve their faculties for action, without wasting them upon any of the things which he deemed useless, but to which other people devoted much attention. He drew his thought from his heart, as he drew his sword from its scabbard, dazzling in its purity as was the *hand with the wristband of ermine* in his crest. Once this

[illegible] was guessed, everything was explained. One could understand the profound resolutions due to clear, distinct, straightforward thoughts, as immaculate as the ermine. One could understand the sale to his sister before the war, which provided for every emergency, death, confiscation, exile. The beauty of the character of these two old people, for the sister lived only in and for her brother, cannot be understood to its full extent by such selfish creatures as the uncertainty and inconstancy of our age are making of us. An archangel, hidden to read their hearts, would not have discovered a single thought therein stamped with self-interest. In 1814, when the cure of Guérande suggested to the Baron du Guénic that he should go to Paris and claim his reward, the old sister, miser as she was in household affairs, exclaimed:

"For shame! does my brother need to go and hold out his hand like a beggar?"

"One would think that I served the king from interested motives," said the old man. "At all events, it is for him to remember. And then, too, the poor king is sadly embarrassed with all the people who are pestering him. If he should distribute all France in small pieces, they would ask for more."

This loyal servitor, who was so deeply interested in Louis XVIII., received a colonel's commission, the cross of Saint-Louis and a retiring pension of two thousand francs.

"The king has remembered," he said, when he received his patents.

No one corrected his mistake. The work had been done by the Duc de Feltre on the authority of the Vendean army lists, where he found the name of Du Guénic with divers other Breton names in *ic.* Consequently, in order to reward the King of France, the baron in 1815 maintained a siege at Guérande against the battalions of General Travot and absolutely refused to surrender that fortress; when it became necessary to evacuate it, he fled to the woods with a band of *Chouans*, who remained in arms until the second return of the Bourbons. Guérande still remembers that last siege. If the old Breton bands had taken the field, the war aroused by that heroic resistance would have set La Vendée on fire. We are compelled to admit that the Baron du Guénic was quite illiterate, but illiterate as peasants are: that is to say, he could read and write and could reckon a little; he knew the military art and heraldry; but, except his prayer book, he had not read three volumes in his life. His costume, which could not be a matter of indifference to him, was invariable; it consisted of heavy shoes, milled stockings, breeches of greenish velvet, a cloth waistcoat and a frock coat with a cape, to which was attached the cross of Saint-Louis. His face wore an expression of admirable serenity, and for a year past it had seemed as if sleep, the herald of death, were preparing it for everlasting repose. These constant fits of drowsiness, recurring with greater frequency from day to day, did not alarm his wife, or his blind sister, or

his friends, whose medical knowledge was not great. In their eyes, these sublime pauses in the action of a mind without reproach, but sorely fatigued, could readily be explained: the baron had done his duty. Those words told the whole story.

In that house, the subject of most engrossing interest was the fate of the dispossessed branch of the royal family. The future of the exiled Bourbons and of the Catholic religion and the influence of the new political régime upon Bretagne, occupied the minds of the baron's family to the exclusion of everything else. No other interest was mingled therewith except the attachment of all for the only son, Calyste, the heir, the only hope of the great name of Du Guénic. The old Vendean, the old *Chouan*, had in some sort renewed his youth a few years before, in order to accustom this son of his to the violent exercises in which a gentleman who is likely to be called into the field at any moment should be proficient. As soon as Calyste was sixteen years old, his father took him into the swamps and woods, teaching him the rudiments of war in the pleasures of the chase, setting the example himself in everything, insensible to fatigue, firmly seated in his saddle, sure of his aim whatever the quarry, on the ground or on the wing, intrepid at surmounting obstacles, inciting his son to danger as if he had ten children to lose. And so, when the Duchesse de Berri came to France to conquer the kingdom, the father took his son with him in order to put him in the way of practising the device upon

his arms. The baron started in the night without a word to his wife—who might perhaps have induced him to change his decision—taking his only son to battle as to a fête, and attended by Gasselin, his only vassal, who was overjoyed to go. The three men of the family were absent six months, without once informing the baroness of their whereabouts, so that she never read *La Quotidienne* without trembling at every line, as did his old sister, who sat heroically straight and did not move a muscle as she listened to the reading of the paper. The three guns hanging in the great hall had, therefore, seen recent service. The baron, who deemed this attempted uprising ill-advised, left the field before the affair of La Pénissière; except for that, perhaps the family of Du Guénic would have become extinct.

When the father, the son and the servant arrived home one stormy night, after taking leave of Madame, and surprised the baroness and old Mademoiselle du Guénic, who, by the exercise of a faculty with which all blind people are endowed, detected the steps of three men in the lane, the baron looked at the picture formed by his anxious dear ones around the little table lighted by the antique lamp, and in a tremulous voice, while Gasselin was replacing the three guns and the swords on the wall, uttered these words, truly feudal in their artless candor: "All the barons did not do their duty." Then, after embracing his wife and sister, he sat down in his old armchair, and ordered supper to be

served for his son, Gasselin and himself. Gasselin, by throwing himself in front of Calyste, had received a sabre thrust in the shoulder; so simple a matter that the women hardly thanked him. Neither the baron nor his guests uttered a single malediction or insulting word against the victors. This silence is one of the peculiarities of the Breton character. In forty years, no one had ever surprised on the baron's lips a scornful word anent his adversaries. It was for them to ply their trade as he did his duty. Such profound silence is an indication of immovable will. This last effort, this fitful gleam of expiring energy, had caused the baron's present enfeebled condition. The renewed exile of the Bourbon family, whose expulsion was as miraculous as their restoration, caused him to suffer keenly.

About six o'clock in the evening, at the moment when this scene opens, the baron, who, according to his long-established custom, had finished his dinner at four, had fallen asleep listening to the reading of *La Quotidienne.* His head was resting against the back of his chair in the chimney corner on the garden side.

In front of the fireplace, beside this gnarled trunk of the ancient tree, the baroness sat upon one of the old-fashioned chairs,—a perfect type of those adorable creatures who exist only in England, Scotland or Ireland. In no other country are produced those damsels of clay kneaded with milk, with golden hair whose curls are moulded by the hand of angels, for

the light of Heaven seems to shimmer in their spirals with the air that plays among them.

Fanny O'Brien was one of those sylphs, strong in her affection, invincible in misfortune, sweet as the music of her voice, pure as the blue of her eyes, beautiful with a refined, delicate beauty, and endowed with that quality of the flesh, silky to the hand and lovely to the eye, which neither brush nor words can depict. Still lovely at forty-two, many men would have deemed themselves fortunate to marry her, as they looked upon the splendors of that ruddy-hued August, laden with flowers and fruit, refreshed by heavenly dew.

The baroness held the newspaper in one dimpled hand whose short fingers and nails cut square were like those on antique statues. She was half reclining upon her chair, without awkwardness or affectation, her feet thrust out to warm them, she was dressed in a black velvet gown, for the air had been cool for some few days. The high waist marked the outline of a magnificent pair of shoulders and a shapely bust, which had not been disfigured by nursing an only son. Her hair fell in ringlets beside her cheeks in the English style. Arranged in a simple braid on top of her head, and kept in place by a tortoise-shell comb, it glistened in the sunlight like filigree-work in burnished gold, so far was it from having an uncertain color. The baroness confined in a braid the stray curls that played about her neck and are a sign of race. The tiny plait, lost in the mass of carefully arranged locks, enabled the eye to follow with

delight the wavy line by which her neck was attached to her lovely shoulders. This little detail proved the great care she always expended on her toilet. She made it her aim to rejoice the old man's sight. What a charming, captivating attention! When you see a woman displaying in her home life the coquetry that other women expend in a single sentiment, be sure that she is as noble a mother as wife, that she is the joy and flower of the household, that she has a due sense of her wifely obligations, that she has in her heart and in her mind the same charm as in her exterior, that she does good in secret, that she loves her neighbors for themselves, as she loves God for Himself. Thus it seemed as if the Virgin in Paradise, under whose protection she passed her life, had rewarded her chaste youth, her sanctified life with this noble old man, by surrounding her with a sort of halo that preserved her from the ravages of time. Plato might have celebrated the changes in her beauty as so many fresh charms. Her complexion, once so fair, had taken on those warm, pearly tones that painters adore. Her broad, well-shaped brow welcomed lovingly the light that played upon it in shimmering beams. Her eyes, of turquoise blue, shone with extreme gentleness beneath light, velvety lashes. Her soft eyelids, her throbbing temples, conveyed an indescribable suggestion of silent melancholy. The circle of her eyes, below, was soft and white, and marked with bluish veins as at the base of the nose. The nose was aquiline and thin, and there was

something royal in its shape that recalled her noble birth. Her mouth, pure and cleanly cut, was embellished by a pleasant smile, dictated by untiring amiability. Her teeth were small and white. She had become slightly stout, but her sloping hips, her graceful figure, were none the worse therefor. The autumn of her beauty displayed some bright spring flowers forgotten in their time, and the rich splendor of summer. Her beautifully rounded arms, her firm, lustrous skin had a finer grain; her contours had acquired their full development. Lastly, her open, serene and somewhat roseate face and the purity of her blue eyes, which a too stern glance would have wounded, expressed the unalterable gentleness, the infinite tenderness, of the angels.

At the other corner of the fireplace, in another easy-chair, the octogenarian sister, the picture of her brother in everything save her costume, was listening to the reading of the newspaper, and knitting stockings, a task for which eyesight is not essential. Both her eyes were covered with a film, and she obstinately refused to undergo an operation therefor, despite her sister-in-law's entreaties. She alone knew the secret of her own obstinacy; she attributed it to lack of courage, but she did not choose that twenty-five louis should be expended for her; that sum would have made a difference in the household economy. But she would have loved dearly to see her brother. The two old people made an admirable foil for the baroness's beauty. What woman would not have seemed young and pretty

between the baron and his sister? Mademoiselle Zéphirine, sightless as she was, knew nothing of the changes eighty years had wrought in her appearance. Her pale, thin face, to which the white, sightless eyes gave something of the aspect of a dead face, and which three or four protruding teeth rendered almost threatening; where the deep orbits of her eyes were surrounded by reddish circles, and where the chin and upper lip bore some few tokens of virility long since whitened by time; her cold but tranquil face was framed by a little cap of brown calico, quilted like a counterpane, trimmed with a linen flounce, and tied under her chin with strings that were always a little rusty. She wore a coarse cloth skirt over a quilted petticoat, a genuine mattress that concealed double louis, and pockets sewn to a belt which she took off every night and put on every morning, like a garment. Her waist was encased in the popular jacket of Bretagne, made of cloth like the skirt and adorned with a collarette with innumerable folds, the washing of which was the cause of the only dispute she had ever had with her sister-in-law, for she would not change it more than once a week. From the huge padded sleeves of this jacket, emerged two withered but nervous arms, at the ends of which were two hands incessantly in motion—hands of a slightly reddish hue that made the arms seem white as poplar wood in comparison. Her hands were hooked as a result of the contraction due to incessant knitting; they were like a stocking frame always ready for use; the

phenomenal thing would have been to see them at rest. From time to time, Mademoiselle du Guénic took a long knitting needle that was thrust through her dress at her throat, and poked it about between her cap and her hair. A stranger would have smiled to see the indifferent way in which she replaced the needle without fear of wounding herself. She was as straight as a steeple. This imposing carriage might have been considered one of those coquetries of old age which prove that pride is a passion necessary to life. Her smile was bright and cheerful. She too had done her duty.

When Fanny saw that the baron had fallen asleep, she ceased to read the paper. A sunbeam passed from one window to the other, cutting the atmosphere of the old hall in two with a band of gold, and causing the black furniture to shine resplendently. The light played about the carvings of the ceiling, darted into the linen chests, laid a glistening cloth upon the oaken table, and brightened up the pleasant, dark apartment, as Fanny's voice poured into the aged lady's heart, music as grand and joyous as that beam. Soon the sun's rays assumed the reddish tints that lead on, by insensible degrees, to the melancholy tones of twilight. The baroness fell into a serious reverie, one of those periods of absolute silence which her sister-in-law had noticed for the past fortnight, seeking to find an explanation of them for herself without questioning the baroness; but she studied the causes of this preoccupation none the less carefully, after the manner of the

blind, who read as on a black page with white letters, and in whose minds everything awakens, as it were, a divinatory echo. The blind old maid, for whom the approach of darkness had no meaning, continued to knit, and the silence became so profound that the sound of the steel needles could be plainly heard.

"You dropped the paper, sister, and still you are not asleep," said the old lady, with a cunning air.

It had grown dark; Mariotte came in to light the lamp and placed it on a square table in front of the fire; then she fetched her distaff, her clew of thread and a little stool, took her place in the embrasure of the window looking on the courtyard, and began to spin as she did every evening. Gasselin was still making his round among the out-buildings, feeding the baron's horse and Calyste's, seeing that all was well in the stables and giving the two noble hunting dogs their evening meal. The joyous yelping of the two creatures was the last sound that awakened the echoes hidden in the black walls of the old house. The two dogs and the two horses were the last vestiges of the splendors of the days of chivalry. Had a man of imagination been sitting upon the stone steps, giving free rein to the poetic thoughts aroused by the personages still living in that house, he would have been startled perhaps to hear the dogs and the stamping and neighing of the horses.

Gasselin was one of the short, thickset Bretons, with black hair and sunburned faces, who are silent,

slow-moving, obstinate as mules, but who always go forward in the path marked out for them. He was forty-two years old and had been twenty-five years in the family. Mademoiselle had taken Gasselin in at seventeen, upon learning of the baron's marriage and probable return. He looked upon himself now as one of the family; he had played with Calyste, he loved the family horses and dogs, and talked to them and caressed them as if they belonged to him. He wore a blue linen coat with little pockets flapping up and down on his hips, waistcoat and pantaloons of the same material, blue stockings and heavy hobnailed shoes. When it was too cold, and in rainy weather, he donned the goat-skin cap commonly worn in his province.

Mariotte, who was also past forty, was, as a woman, what Gasselin was as a man. Never was a more perfectly-matched pair harnessed together; the same complexion, the same stature, the same small, bright, black eyes. People could not understand why Mariotte and Gasselin had never married; perhaps it would have been incestuous, for they seemed to be brother and sister. Mariotte's wages were thirty crowns and Gasselin's one hundred francs; but a salary of a thousand crowns elsewhere would not have induced either of them to leave the Du Guénic household.

Both were under the orders of the old maid, who, between the Vendean war and her brother's return, had become used to managing the household. So it happened that when she knew that the baron was

about to bring home a mistress of the house, she was very deeply moved at the thought that she would have to lay aside the sceptre of a housekeeper, and abdicate in favor of the Baronne du Guénic, whose first subject she would be.

Mademoiselle Zéphirine was very agreeably surprised to find in Miss Fanny O'Brien, a young lady born to exalted rank, to whom the petty details of housekeeping in a poor family were excessively repugnant, and who, like all noble souls, would have preferred dry baker's bread to the daintiest repast she was obliged to prepare with her own hands; capable of performing the most painful duties of maternity, strong to endure every necessary privation, but without courage to undertake vulgar occupations. When the baron begged his sister, in the name of his timid wife, to manage their establishment, the old maid gave the baroness a sisterly kiss; she adopted her as her daughter and forthwith adored her, overjoyed that she could continue to govern the household, which she did with incredible rigor and economy, never relaxed except on great occasions, such as her sister's lying-in, her nourishment during her confinement, and everything that concerned Calyste, the beloved child of the whole family. Although the two servants were accustomed to this strict regimen and there was no occasion to say anything to them, as they looked after the interests of their master more carefully than their own, Mademoiselle Zéphirine always kept her eye upon everything. As there was nothing to

distract her attention, she always knew, without going up to the garret, the size of the pile of walnuts there, and how much oats there was in the bins in the stable, without plunging her nervous arm therein. At the end of a string attached to the belt of her jacket, she carried a boatswain's whistle with which she called Mariotte by blowing once and Gasselin by blowing twice. Gasselin's great delight lay in cultivating the garden and raising handsome fruit and fine vegetables there. He had so little work that, except for his gardening, he would have found time hang heavily on his hands. When he had groomed his horses in the morning, he scrubbed the floors and cleaned the two rooms on the ground floor; there was little in that line for him to do *after his masters.* So you could not have found a single weed or a single harmful insect in the whole garden. Sometimes they would surprise Gasselin standing bareheaded in the bright sunlight, watching a field-mouse or the awful larva of a cockchafer; then he would run with childlike joy to show his masters the animal that had kept him busy a whole week. It was a pleasure to him, on fast days, to go to Le Croisic for fish, which he could buy cheaper there than at Guérande.

So it was that there never was a more united, more coherent family, or one in which the various members understood one another more perfectly, than in this saintly, noble family. Masters and servants seemed to have been made for one another. For twenty-five years, there had been no discord or

trouble of any sort. The only sorrows were the child's slight indispositions, and the only alarms were caused by the events of 1814 and 1830. Although the same things were invariably done at the same hours, although the same dishes appeared upon the table as regularly as the seasons came around, this monotony, like that of nature, which is varied only by the alternations of cloud and rain and sunshine, was made endurable by the affection which reigned in all their hearts, and was the more fruitful and beneficent, in that it was produced by natural laws.

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When the twilight was at an end, Gasselin entered the hall and asked his master respectfully if he had need of him.

"You may go out or go to bed after prayers," said the baron, waking up, "unless madame or her sister—"

The two women made a sign of acquiescence. Gasselin knelt on the floor when he saw his masters rise preparatory to kneeling on their chairs. Mariotte likewise adopted an attitude of prayer on her stool. Old Mademoiselle du Guénic repeated the prayer in a loud voice. When it was ended, there was a knocking at the door on the lane. Gasselin went to answer the knock.

"It must be Monsieur le Curé; he almost always comes first," said Mariotte.

Indeed, they all recognized the curé of Guérande by the sound of his footsteps on the resonant steps. He bowed respectfully to the three members of the family, and addressed to each of them some of those unctuously amiable phrases that priests always have at their tongues' ends. To the absent-minded *bonsoir* accorded him by the mistress of the house, he replied with a glance of ecclesiastical scrutiny.

"Are you not well, or are you anxious about something, Madame la Baronne?" he asked.

"Thanks, no," said she.

Monsieur Grimont, a man of some fifty years, of medium height, enveloped in his cassock, beneath which protruded two large shoes adorned with silver buckles, presented above his neck-band a chubby face, of rather a pale cast, generally speaking, but slightly tinged with gold. He had a plump hand. His ministerial countenance suggested the Dutch burgomaster by its smooth complexion and by its flesh tones, and the Breton peasant by the straight black hair and by the animation in the brown eyes, restrained, however, by the decorum of his profession. His joyous humor, like that of all people whose consciences are calm and pure, permitted him to jest. There was nothing careworn or crabbed in his manner as in that of poor curés whose power or whose very existence is contested by their parishioners, and who, instead of being, as Napoléon sublimely put it, the moral leaders of the people and natural judges of the peace, are treated as enemies. To see Monsieur Grimont walking through Guérande, the most incredulous traveler would recognize in him the sovereign of that Catholic town; but this sovereign lowered the banner of his spiritual superiority before the feudal supremacy of the Du Guénics. In that hall, he was like a chaplain beneath the roof of his feudal lord. At church, when he gave the benediction, his hand was always stretched out first toward the chapel belonging to the Du Guénics, where the armed hand, their device, was carved on the keystone of the arch.

"I thought Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had arrived," said the curé, seating himself after taking the baroness's hand and kissing it. "She is falling into bad ways. Is the fashion of dissipation making headway? I see that Monsieur le Chevalier is at Les Touches again this evening."

"Don't say anything of his visits before Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël!" said the old maid softly.

"Ah! mademoiselle," rejoined Mariotte, "can you prevent the whole town from gossiping?"

"What do they say?" asked the baroness.

"The girls, the gossips, everybody in fact, believes that he's in love with Mademoiselle des Touches."

"A youngster of Calyste's build plies his trade by winning hearts," said the baron.

"Here is Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël," observed Mariotte.

The sand in the courtyard was, in fact, heard to crunch at that moment beneath the discreet footsteps of the lady in question, who was attended by a small servant armed with a lantern. When she caught sight of the servant, Mariotte transported her paraphernalia into the large hall, to talk with him by the light of the candle in the lantern, which she burned at the rich and miserly maiden lady's expense, thus economizing for her masters.

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël was a thin, dried-up damsel, yellow as the parchment of the ancient registers of parliament, she was wrinkled like a lake ruffled by the wind, had gray eyes, large protruding

teeth and hands like a man's; she was rather short, slightly crooked and perhaps hunchbacked; but no one had ever had any curiosity to discover her perfections or her imperfections. Dressed in the same general style as Mademoiselle du Guénic, she made a commotion among an enormous quantity of skirts and petticoats when she tried to find one of the two openings in her dress through which her pockets were reached. The most extraordinary clinking of keys and coins was thereupon heard beneath those garments. She always had on one side the good housekeeper's regular supply of old iron, and on the other, her silver snuff-box, her thimble, her knitting and other jangling instruments. Instead of the quilted cap worn by Mademoiselle du Guénic, she wore a green hat in which she was in the habit of inspecting her melon patch; it had passed, like the melons, from green to yellow; and, as to its shape, twenty years later it has become fashionable at Paris under the name of *bibi*. The hat, made under her eyes by her nieces, was of green Florence taffeta purchased at Guérande, and with a frame which she renewed every five years at Nantes, allowing it the duration of a legislature. Her nieces also made her dresses, which were always cut from the same patterns. The old maid still carried the cane with a small handle used by ladies at the beginning of the reign of Marie-Antoinette. She belonged to one of the first noble families in Bretagne. Her arms bore the ermine of the ancient dukes. In herself and her sister, the illustrious Breton family of

Pen-Hoël would come to an end. Her younger sister had married a Kergarouët, who, notwithstanding the disapprobation of the province, added the name of Pen-Hoël to his own, and called himself the Vicomte de Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël.

"Heaven has punished him," said the old maid; "he has nothing but daughters and the name of Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël will die with him."

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël possessed about seven thousand francs a year in real estate. Having been of age some thirty-six years, she managed her own property, rode about on horseback to inspect it, and displayed in everything, the firm and determined character that is noticeable in most hunchbacks. Her avarice was admired for ten leagues around, and not a word was ever heard in disapprobation. She kept one maid and the small servant. All her expenses, taxes not included, did not amount to a thousand francs a year. Therefore she was the object of much cajolery on the part of the Kergarouët-Pen-Hoëls, who passed the winters at Nantes and the summers at their estate on the bank of the Loire, below the Indret. She was known to be inclined to leave her fortune and her savings to that one of her nieces who should best succeed in winning her favor.

Every three months, one of the four Mesdemoiselles de Kergarouët, the youngest of whom was twelve and the oldest twenty, came to pass a few days with the old maid. As she was a close friend of Zéphirine du Guénic, and had been brought up in

adoration of the Breton grandeur of the Du Guénics, Jacqueline de Pen-Hoël had, when Calyste was born, formed the project of transmitting her property to the chevalier by marrying him to one of the nieces with whom the Vicomtesse de Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël should present her. She thought of redeeming some of the best of the Du Guénic estates by repaying the farmer *engagistes*.

When avarice fixes its mind upon a definite object, it ceases to be a vice, it is the mechanism of a virtue, its excessive privations become constant offerings, it has in short, the grandeur of a fixed purpose hidden under paltry means. Perhaps Zéphirine was in Jacqueline's secret. Perhaps the baroness, whose mind was wholly given over to her love for her son and her affection for his father, had guessed something when she saw the malicious perseverance with which Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël brought with her, every day, Charlotte de Kergarouët, her favorite, aged fifteen. The curé Grimont was certainly in the secret; he assisted the old maid to invest her money to good advantage. But though Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had three hundred thousand francs in gold, the figure at which her savings were estimated; though she had had estates ten times greater than those she actually possessed, the Du Guénics would not have allowed themselves to offer her any attention which could lead the old maid to believe that they were thinking of her fortune. With an admirable feeling of pride, characteristic of the Breton, Jacqueline de Pen-Hoël,

happy in the supremacy assumed by her old friend Zéphirine and the Du Guénics generally, always displayed her appreciation of the honor bestowed upon her when the daughter of the Irish kings and Zéphirine deigned to pay her a visit. She went so far as to conceal with care the species of sacrifice to which she consented every evening by allowing her little servant to burn an *oribus* at the Du Guénics,—*oribus* is the name given to the candle of the color of spiced bread which is commonly used in certain parts of the West.

Thus this aged and wealthy maiden lady was the personification of noble birth, of pride and grandeur. At the moment that you are reading her portrait, an indiscreet remark on the part of Abbé Grimont has revealed the fact that, on the evening when the old baron, the young chevalier and Gasselin stole away, armed with their sabres and their fowling-pieces, to join Madame in La Vendée, to Fanny's great dismay and the great joy of the Bretons, Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had handed the baron the sum of ten thousand francs in gold,—an enormous sacrifice intensified by another ten thousand francs, the product of a tithe collected by the curé, which was entrusted to the old partisan to be offered to the mother of Henri V., in the name of the Pen-Hoëls and the parish of Guérande. Meanwhile, she treated Calyste as a woman would who believes that she has some claims upon him; her projects justified her in keeping an eye upon him; not that she affected any narrow ideas in the matter of gallantry,—she had

the indulgent disposition in that regard of the old ladies of the ancient régime,—but she held in horror the manners introduced by the Revolution. Calyste, who perhaps would have made some progress in her esteem by love adventures with Breton maidens, would certainly have lost considerably if he had yielded to what she called novelties. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, who would have produced money from her treasure chest to appease a girl he had betrayed, would have esteemed Calyste a dissipated wretch if she had seen him driving a tilbury or had heard him speak of going to Paris. If she had caught him reading unorthodox reviews or newspapers, no one knows of what she would have been capable. In her eyes, the new ideas were like interfering with the rotation of crops, they meant ruin under the name of ameliorations and artificial systems, and property mortgaged sooner or later as the result of costly experiments. She considered prudence the true means of making one's fortune; good management, in her view, consisted in heaping up her buckwheat, her rye and her hemp in her granaries; in waiting for a rising market and lying obstinately upon her sacks, at the risk of being considered a forestaller. By a singular chance, she had often made excellent bargains which confirmed her theories. She was called crafty, but she was without wit; she had the obstinacy of a Dutchman, however, the prudence of a cat and the persistence of a priest, which, in such a routine-ridden country, is equivalent to the most profound thought.

"Shall we see Monsieur du Halga to-night?" asked the old lady, taking off her knitted woolen mittens, after the customary exchange of compliments.

"Yes, mademoiselle, I saw him walking his dog up and down the mall," the curé replied.

"Ah! then our *mouche* will be very lively to-night?" she rejoined. "Yesterday, there were only four of us."

At the word *mouche*, the curé took from a drawer in one of the chests, a little round basket of fine wicker-work, ivory counters become yellow as Turkish tobacco by twenty years' use, and a pack of cards as greasy as those used by the Saint-Nazaire customs officers, who change them only once a fortnight. The abbé came back and arranged upon the table himself the necessary counters for each player and placed the basket beside the lamp in the centre of the table, with childish eagerness and the manner of a man accustomed to perform this little service.

A sharp military knock woke the echoes in the silent depths of the old manor-house. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's little servant went gravely and opened the door. Soon the long, spare body of the Chevalier du Halga, formerly Admiral Kergarouët's flag captain, soberly dressed in the fashion of the day, was outlined in black in the half-darkness that still reigned on the stoop.

"Come in, chevalier!" cried Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"The altar is ready," said the curé.

The chevalier was a man in delicate health, who

wore flannels for his rheumatism, a black silk cap to protect his head from the damp, a spencer to guarantee his precious chest against the sudden winds that cooled the atmosphere of Guérande. He always went about armed with a gold-headed cane to drive away the dogs that paid unseasonable court to his favorite bitch. Finical as a coquette, deranged by the slightest obstacle, speaking low to spare the remains of his voice, this man had been one of the most intrepid and intelligent officers of the old navy. He had been honored with the esteem of the Bailli de Suffren, with the friendship of the Comte du Portenduère. His gallant conduct as Admiral de Kergarouët's flag captain was written in legible characters upon his seamed and scarred face. To see him now, no one would recognize the voice that dominated the tempest, the eye that scanned the sea, the indomitable courage of the Breton sailor. The chevalier did not smoke or swear; he was as calm and gentle as a girl, and devoted himself to his dog Thisbé with the solicitude of an old woman. In this way he conveyed the most exalted idea of his past and gone gallantry. He never spoke of the surprising deeds that had astonished the Comte d'Estaing. Although he had the manner of an invalid, walked as if he were afraid of crushing eggs at every step, complained of the cool wind, of the heat of the sun and the dampness of the mist, he displayed two rows of white teeth set in red gums, which reassured one as to his disease—a somewhat costly disease, by the way, for it consisted in taking

four meals, of monastic proportions, each day. His frame, like the baron's, was bony and absolutely indestructible, covered with parchment that clings to the bones as the skin of an Arabian horse clings to its nerves, which seem to gleam in the sunlight. His complexion had retained a dark brown tint, due to his travels in the Indies, from which he had brought back neither ideas nor adventures. He had been an *emigré*, had lost his fortune, had then received the Cross of Saint-Louis and a pension of two thousand francs legitimately due to his services, and paid from the naval retiring fund. The slight hypochondria which led him to invent a thousand imaginary ills was easily explained by his sufferings during the emigration. He had served in the Russian navy up to the day that the Emperor Alexander attempted to employ it against France. when he resigned his commission and went to live at Odessa with the Duc de Richelieu, with whom he returned to France, and who procured for him the pension due to such a glorious remnant of the old Breton navy.

At the death of Louis XVIII., at which time he returned to Guérande, the Chevalier du Halga became mayor of the town. The curé, the chevalier and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had been in the habit for the past fifteen years, of passing their evenings at the Du Guénic mansion, which was also frequented by several other nobly born persons of the town and neighborhood. Every one will readily detect in the Du Guénics, the leaders of this little Faubourg

Saint-Germain of the department, to which none of the officials sent thither by the new government were admitted. For the last six years the curé always coughed at the critical passage of the *Domine, salvum fac regem.* Politics was always at that point in Guérande.

The *mouche* is a game played with five cards and one turned-up, which fixes the trump suit. At every hand, the player is free to take the chances or to stay out. If he stays out, he risks only his stake, for as long as there are no forfeits in the pot, each player puts in only a small sum. The object of the game is to take tricks, which are paid for in proportion to the stake. If there are five sous in the pot, each trick is worth a sou. The player who fails to take a trick is put in the *mouche;* he then owes the whole amount of the stake, which increases the pot for the following hand. The *mouches* due are written down; they are placed in the pot one after another in the order of their size, those for the largest amount taking precedence of the smaller ones. Those who stay out of the game give up their cards during the hand, but they are considered as dead cards. The cards in the stock may be taken in exchange, as at *écarté,* by the players in order. Each one takes as many cards as he wants, so that the first and second players may absorb the stock between them. The trump card belongs to the dealer, who is the last to exchange his cards; he has the right to take it in exchange for one of the cards in his hand. There is one terrible card called *Mistigris*

that overtops all the others. Mistigris is the knave of clubs.

This game, although extremely simple, does not lack interest. The cupidity inherent in man is developed therein, as well as diplomatic shrewdness and play of features. At the Du Guénics', each player took twenty counters and became responsible for five sous, which carried the sum total of the stake to five *liards* for each hand—a large sum in the eyes of all concerned. Assuming that you had excellent luck, you might possibly win fifty sous, which was more than anyone at Guérande spent in a day. Therefore Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël brought to this game, which is set down in the list published by the Académie as being surpassed in harmlessness only by *La Bataille,* a passion equal to that displayed by sportsmen in a great hunt. Mademoiselle Zéphirine, who played with the baroness on equal shares, attached no slight importance to the *mouche.* To invest a liard on the chance of winning five, from one hand to another, was a financial operation of vast proportions in the eyes of the old miser, and one in which she expended as much mental energy, as the most inveterate speculator expends, during the session of the Bourse, on the rise and fall of shares.

By a diplomatic convention, negotiated in September 1825, at the close of an evening during which Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël lost thirty-seven sous, the game was to cease as soon as any player manifested a desire to that end after losing ten sous.

Politeness would not permit anyone to cause a player the petty vexation of watching a *mouche* in which he had no part. But all the passions have their Jesuitism. The chevalier and the baron, those two old politicians, had found a way of eluding the treaty. When all the players were very desirous of prolonging an exciting game, the bold Chevalier du Halga, one of those good fellows who are lavish and open-handed with money they do not earn, always offered ten counters to Zéphirine or Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, when one or both of them had lost their five sous, on condition that they should be returned if they won. An old bachelor might venture to take that liberty with maiden ladies. The baron also offered the two old maids ten counters, a pretext for continuing the game. The two misers always accepted, not without urging, according to the manners and customs of their kind. Before indulging in such prodigality as this, the baron and chevalier must have won, otherwise the offer would have taken on the character of an insult.

The game was always very animated when a Demoiselle de Kergarouët was at her aunt's *in transitu*—in that house the Kergarouëts had never succeeded in being called Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël by anyone, not even by the servants, who had strict orders on that point. The aunt spoke to her niece of the *mouche* at the Du Guénics as a very great pleasure. The little one had orders to be amiable—by no means a difficult matter when she saw the comely Calyste, upon whom all four of the Demoiselles

de Kergarouët fairly doted. Those young women, who had been reared under the influence of modern civilization, did not stop at five sous, and piled *mouche* upon *mouche*. Then there would be I. O. U.'s sometimes amounting to a hundred sous, and ranging all the way from two sous and a half to ten sous. Those were evenings of great excitement for the old blind woman. The tricks were called *mains* at Guérande. The baroness would press her sister-in-law's foot a number of times equal to the number of *mains* that were sure, according to her own hand. To play or not to play, according to the amount in the pot, caused internal discussions in which cupidity struggled with fear. They asked one another: "Would you go in?" manifesting a feeling of envy of those who had sufficiently good hands to tempt fate, and a feeling of despair when they felt obliged to stay out. If Charlotte de Kergarouët, who was generally taxed with mild imprudence, was lucky in her rash ventures, her aunt, if she had won nothing herself, would be quite cool to her as they returned home, and would lecture her; she had too much decision of character, a young woman ought not to break a lance with venerable persons; she had an insolent way of gathering in the stakes or of playing her hand; good manners required a little more reserve and modesty on a young woman's part; it was not proper to laugh at other people's bad luck, etc., etc. The everlasting jokes, which were made a thousand times a year but were always new, about the team that must be

harnessed to the basket that held the stakes when it was too heavily laden, were passed from one to another. They talked of a team of oxen, elephants, horses, asses and dogs. Even after twenty years, no one noticed the repetition. The suggestion always aroused the same smile. It was the same with the remarks that the pang consequent upon the taking in of a full pot called forth from those who had fattened it for the benefit of others. The cards were dealt with automatic slowness; they talked in whispers. These excellent and noble-minded people had the adorable foible of being suspicious of one another at play. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël almost always accused the curé of cheating when he captured a pot.

"It's very strange," the curé would say, "that I never cheat when I am in the *mouche.*"

No one of the party ever played a card without profound thought, shrewd glances and remarks more or less astute, ingenious and clever. The hands were, as may readily be imagined, interspersed with tales of what had happened in the town, or with discussions upon political matters. Often the players would sit for a full quarter of an hour, engaged in conversation, holding their cards like a fan against their stomachs. If, as a result of these interruptions, there happened to be one counter short in the pot, everybody would insist that he had put his in. Almost invariably the chevalier made up the deficit, and was accused by all of thinking of the bells in his ears, of his head, of his familiar

spirits, and of forgetting his stake. When the chevalier had put in his counter, old Zéphirine or the crafty hunchback would be seized with remorse; they would think that perhaps they had not put in their stakes, they would believe they had not, or be in doubt about it; but, after all, the chevalier was rich enough to stand that trifling loss. Often the baron would forget entirely where he was, when the conversation turned on the misfortunes of the royal family. Sometimes the result of the game, then it was always surprising to these inveterate gamblers, —would show that all were on exactly the same footing. After a certain number of hands, each would have recovered his original investment, and they would separate, the hour being late, without loss or gain, but not without emotion. On such painful occasions, the air would be full of complaints about the *mouche;* the *mouche* had not been exciting; in fact, the players abused the *mouche* as the negroes beat the moon in the water when the weather does not please them. The evening was considered to have been quite colorless. They had worked hard for a small result. When, at the time of their first visit, the Vicomte and Vicomtesse de Kergarouët talked about whist and boston as being games more interesting than the *mouche* and were encouraged to explain them by the baroness, who was excessively bored by the *mouche,* the Du Guénic circle entered into the idea, not without crying out against innovations; but it was impossible for them to understand those games,

which, as soon as the Kergarouëts had gone, were voted head-splitting affairs, algebraic problems of incredible difficulty. One and all preferred their dear *mouche*, their sociable little *mouche*. So the *mouche* triumphed over the modern games as old-fashioned things triumphed over new everywhere in Bretagne.

While the curé was dealing the cards, the baroness asked the Chevalier du Halga the same questions that had been asked him the night before, touching his health. It was a point of honor with the chevalier always to have a new disease. If the questions always resembled one another, the former flag captain had a great advantage over them in his replies. To-day his ribs had troubled him. It was a remarkable fact that the worthy chevalier never complained of his wounds. All their serious consequences he expected and knew all about; but fanciful troubles, pains in the head, dogs gnawing at his stomach, bells ringing in his ears, and a thousand other familiar spirits disturbed him terribly; he posed as incurably ill with the more reason, because the physicians knew no remedy for diseases that had no existence.

"Yesterday, I believe, you had some trouble in your legs, had you not?" said the curé, gravely.

"It has taken a leap," the chevalier replied.

"From the legs to the ribs?" queried Mademoiselle Zéphirine.

"It didn't stop on the way, did it?" said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, with a smile.

The chevalier bowed solemnly, with a negative gesture comical enough, which would have proved to an observer that, in his youth, the sailor had been clever, loving and beloved. Perhaps his fossilized life at Guérande concealed many memories. When he was planted aimlessly on his heron legs in the sunlight on the mall, watching the sea or his dog's capers, perhaps he was living again in the earthly paradise of a past fertile in memories.

"The old Duc de Lenoncourt is dead," said the baron, recalling the passage in *La Quotidienne* at which his wife had stopped. "Well, the king's first gentleman of the chamber hasn't been slow in going to join his master. I shall soon go too."

"My dear, my dear!" said his wife, softly patting her husband's bony, callous hand.

"Let him talk, sister," said Zéphirine; "as long as I am above ground, he won't be underneath: he's my junior."

A bright smile played about the old maid's lips. When the baron made a remark of that kind, the players and callers always looked at one another with emotion, filled with anxiety at the melancholy humor of the King of Guérande. Those who had come to call on him would say to one another as they went away: "Monsieur du Guénic was depressed. Did you notice how he falls asleep?" And the next day all Guérande would be talking about it. "The Baron du Guénic is failing!" That phrase opened the conversation in every household.

"Is Thisbé well?" Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël asked the chevalier, as soon as the cards were dealt.

"The poor beast is like myself," said the chevalier, "her nerves are out of order, she continually lifts up one of her paws as she runs. Like this, look!"

As he curled up one of his arms to raise it in imitation of his dog, the chevalier showed his hand to his neighbor the hunchback, who wanted to know if he had any trumps or Mistigris. It was an opening ruse, to which he fell a victim.

"Aha!" said the baroness, "the end of Monsieur le Curé's nose is turning white; he must have Mistigris."

The curé's delight, like that of all the other players, at having Mistigris in his hand, was so keen, that the poor priest could not conceal it. There is on every human face a spot where the secrets of the heart betray themselves, and these good people, being accustomed to watch one another closely, had succeeded, after some years, in discovering the curé's weak point; when he had Mistigris, the end of his nose turned white. The others thereupon took good care not to play.

"You had company to-day, had you not?" said the chevalier to Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"Yes, one of my brother-in-law's cousins. He surprised me by telling me of the marriage of Madame la Comtesse de Kergarouët, a Mademoiselle de Fontaine—"

"A daughter of *Grand-Jacques!*" cried the chevalier, who had never left his admiral during his stay in Paris.

"The countess is his heir; she married a former ambassador. He told me some of the most extraordinary things about our neighbor, Mademoiselle des Touches,—so extraordinary that I wouldn't believe them. Calyste would not be so assiduous in his visits to her, he has enough common sense to notice such monstrosities."

"Monstrosities?" repeated the baron, aroused by that word.

The baroness and the curé exchanged a significant glance. The cards were dealt and the old maid had Mistigris, so she did not care to continue the conversation, well pleased to conceal her satisfaction under cover of the general amazement caused by her remark.

"It's your turn to play, Monsieur le Baron," said she, under her breath.

"My nephew is not one of the young men who are fond of monstrosities," said Zéphirine, thrusting her needle under her cap.

"Mistigris!" cried Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, making no reply to her friend.

The curé, who seemed fully informed as to the relations of Calyste and Mademoiselle des Touches, did not enter the lists.

"What does Mademoiselle des Touches do that is so extraordinary?" the baron asked.

"She smokes," said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"That's very healthy," said the chevalier.

"Her property?" queried the baron.

"She is running through her property," the old maid replied.

"Everybody came in, everybody is in the *mouche;* I have the king, queen and knave of trumps, Mistigris and a king," said the baroness. "The stakes are ours, sister."

This hand, won without playing a card, crushed Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël to the earth, and she ceased to think about Calyste and Mademoiselle des Touches.

At nine o'clock, only the baroness and the curé remained in the hall. The four old people had gone to bed. The chevalier, as was his custom, escorted Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël as far as her house on the public square of Guérande, indulging in reflections upon the shrewd play of the last hand, on their good or ill luck, or upon the ever new delight with which Mademoiselle Zéphirine buried her winnings in her pocket, for the old blind woman did not think of repressing the expression of her feelings upon her face. Madame du Guénic's preoccupation was the main topic of conversation. The chevalier had noticed his charming Irish friend's fits of distraction. When the small servant had ascended the steps at her door, the old maid replied in a confidential tone to the Chevalier du Halga's conjectures as to the cause of the baroness's extraordinary demeanor, with these words, pregnant with interest:

"I know the reason. Calyste is lost if we do not

marry him off at once. He is in love with Mademoiselle des Touches, an actress."

"In that case, send for Charlotte."

"My sister will receive my letter to-morrow," said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, bidding the chevalier good-night.

Judge, from this specimen of the normal evening's entertainment at Guérande, of the tumult that would be produced in the households of the town, by the arrival, the sojourn, the departure, or even the passing through of a stranger.

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When no sound was to be heard in the baron's chamber or in his sister's, Madame du Guénic looked at the curé who was still playing pensively with the counters.

"I have guessed that at last you share my anxiety concerning Calyste," she said.

"Did you notice Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's prim manner this evening?" the curé inquired.

"Yes," was the reply.

"She has the kindest intentions concerning our dear Calyste, I know," continued the curé; "she cherishes him as if he were her own son; and his conduct in La Vendée with his father, and Madame's enthusiastic praise of his devotion have increased Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's affection for him. She will, by gift *inter vivos*, assure her fortune to whichever of her nieces Calyste may marry. I know that you have a much wealthier match for your dear Calyste in Ireland; but it is better to have two strings to your bow. In case your family should not undertake to arrange a marriage for Calyste, Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's fortune is not to be despised. You can always find a wife with seven thousand francs a year for the dear child; but you won't find forty years' savings, nor estates so managed and buildings in such a state of repair as Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's. That godless creature,

Mademoiselle des Touches, has come in time to do much harm. We have found out something about her at last."

"Well?" said the mother.

"Oh! she's a hussy, a strumpet," cried the curé, "a woman of doubtful morals, devoted to the stage, frequenting actors and actresses, squandering her fortune on scribblers, painters, musicians, the devil's company, in a word! She writes her books under an assumed name, by which she is better known, they say, than by that of Félicité des Touches. A veritable mountebank, who has never entered a church since her first communion except to look at statues or pictures. She has spent her fortune decorating Les Touches in the most improper style, to make of it a paradise *à la Mahomet*, where the houris are not women. During her stay there, more expensive wine is drunk than in all Guérande in a year. The Demoiselles de Bougniol furnished lodgings last year for men with goat's beards, suspected of being *Blues*, who went to her house and sang indecent songs fit to make virtuous maidens blush and weep. That's the woman Monsieur le Chevalier adores at this moment! If the creature expressed a wish to-night for one of those infamous books in which the atheists of the present day make sport of everything, the chevalier would come home and saddle his horse himself, and gallop to Nantes to get it for her. I doubt if Calyste would do as much for the Church. Lastly, this Breton is not a royalist. If it should be necessary to fire a

musket for the good cause, and if Mademoiselle des Touches, or Camille Maupin,—that is her literary name, I remember now,—chose to keep Calyste by her side, the chevalier would let his old father go alone."

"No," said the baroness.

"I would not like to put him to the proof, for you might suffer too much by it," rejoined the curé. "All Guérande is turned topsy-turvy over the chevalier's passion for this amphibious creature who is neither man nor woman, who smokes like a hussar, writes like a journalist, and has under her roof at this moment the most venomous of all scribblers, according to the postmaster, that neutral individual who reads the newspapers. There has been talk about him at Nantes. This very morning, this cousin of the Kergarouëts who would like to arrange a match between Charlotte and a man with sixty thousand francs a year, went to see Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël and turned her head with stories about Mademoiselle des Touches that lasted seven hours. Quarter to ten is striking on the church clock now and Calyste isn't at home; he is at Les Touches and perhaps he won't return till morning."

The baroness listened to the curé, who had unconsciously substituted monologue for dialogue; he looked at this lamb of his flock upon whose face deep anxiety could be plainly read. The baroness blushed and trembled. When the Abbé Grimont saw the tears starting in the grief-stricken mother's lovely eyes, he was deeply moved.

"I will see Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël to-morrow, let your mind be at rest," said he in a consoling voice. "Perhaps it isn't as bad as they say; I will find out the truth. At all events, Mademoiselle Jacqueline has confidence in me. And Calyste is our pupil, you know, and won't let the demon bewitch him. He will not disturb the peace his family now enjoys, nor overturn the plans we are forming for his future. So do not weep, madame, all is not lost; a single error is not vice."

"You have simply told me the details," said the baroness. "Was I not the first to perceive the change in Calyste? A mother feels very keenly the grief of ceasing to be first in her son's heart, or the vexation of ceasing to be alone there. This phase in a man's life is one of the drawbacks of maternity; but, although I expected it, I did not think it would come so soon. At all events, I would have liked him to take into his heart a beautiful and noble creature, and not an actress, a female mountebank, a stage woman, an authoress accustomed to feign sentiments, a bad woman who will deceive him and make him unhappy. She has had adventures, I suppose?"

"With several men," said Abbé Grimont. "And yet the atheistical creature was born in Bretagne. She dishonors her native province. I will preach on the subject on Sunday."

"Don't think of such a thing!" said the baroness. "The *paludiers* and the peasants would be quite capable of reporting it at Les Touches.

Calyste is worthy of his name, he is a Breton, and some harm might come to him if he were there, for he would defend her as if she were the Blessed Virgin."

"There's ten o'clock striking and I wish you good-night," said the Abbé Grimont, lighting the candle in his lantern, the glass of which was clean and the metal polished, revealing his housekeeper's zealous attention to small matters at the vicarage. "Who would have dared tell me," he continued, "that a young man reared by you, instructed by me in Christian principles, a fervent Catholic, a child who has lived like a stainless lamb, would plunge into such a den of iniquity!"

"Is it quite beyond doubt?" said the mother. "But how could a woman fail to love Calyste?"

"We need no other proofs than the sorceress's stay at Les Touches. This is the longest time she has remained there during the twenty-four years she has been of age. Her appearances there, fortunately for us, have been of short duration."

"A woman of forty," said the baroness. "I have heard it said in Ireland that a woman of that age is the worst possible mistress a young man can have."

"As to that, I have no knowledge," said the curé. "Indeed, I shall die in my ignorance."

"Alas! and I too," said the baroness artlessly. "I wish now that I had truly loved, so that I could watch and advise and console Calyste."

The curé did not cross the neat little courtyard alone, for the baroness accompanied him to the gate,

hoping to hear Calyste's step in Guérande; but she heard nothing save the heavy sound of the curé's circumspect walk, which grew fainter in the distance and finally ceased when the door of the vicarage closed with what seemed a loud noise in the silent town.

The poor mother returned to the house in despair at the knowledge that the whole town was acquainted with the secret that she thought she alone knew. She sat down, freshened up the wick of the lamp by trimming it with an old pair of scissors, and took up the tapestry on which she was accustomed to work while awaiting Calyste. The baroness flattered herself that she could thus compel her son to return earlier, to pass less time with Mademoiselle des Touches. This ruse of maternal jealousy was of no avail. From day to day, Calyste's visits to Les Touches became more frequent, and he returned home later and later every evening; at last, on the preceding night, the chevalier did not return until midnight.

The baroness, absorbed in her maternal meditation, drew her threads with the activity peculiar to persons who think deeply while working with their hands. Whoever had seen her thus, bending forward in the light of the lamp, beneath the ceilings of that great hall, four centuries old, must have admired the sublime picture. Fanny's flesh was so transparent that one could read her thoughts upon her brow. At times, pricked by the curiosity which assails the purest women, she asked

herself what diabolical secrets those daughters of Baal possessed, to be able so to fascinate men, and to make them forget mother, family, country, self-interest. Again, she would go so far as to desire to meet the woman, in order to judge her intelligently. She measured the extent of the ravages that the innovating spirit of the century, depicted by the curé as so dangerous to young minds, was likely to make upon her only child, hitherto as sincere and pure as an innocent young girl, whose beauty could not have been more fresh than his.

Calyste, that magnificent scion of the oldest of Breton families and the noblest Irish blood, had been reared with great care by his mother. Down to the moment when the baroness placed him in charge of the curé of Guérande, she was sure that no impure word, no evil thought, had ever contaminated her son's ears or his mind. The mother, having fed him with her own milk and having thus given him her blood twice over, was able to present him in a state of virgin innocence to the pastor, who, through veneration for the family, promised to give him a complete Christian education.

Calyste acquired all the instruction imparted at the seminary where the Abbé Grimont had received his education. The baroness taught him English. They found, not without difficulty, a master in mathematics among the government officials at Saint-Nazaire. Calyste was necessarily ignorant of modern literature, the past and present progress of the sciences. His education was confined to the

circumspect history and geography of young ladies' boarding-schools, the Latin and Greek of the seminaries, the literature of the dead languages and a limited selection of French authors. When, at the age of sixteen, he began what Abbé Grimont called his philosophy, he was no less pure than on the day Fanny gave him in charge to the curé. The Church was as motherly as the mother. Without being a devotee or a laughing-stock, the beloved youth was a fervent Catholic. For this lovely, innocent son of hers, the baroness longed to arrange a happy, obscure life. She expected some property, two or three thousand pounds sterling, from an old aunt. This sum, added to the present fortune of the Du Guénics, might make it possible for her to find for Calyste a wife who would bring him twelve or fifteen thousand francs a year. Charlotte de Kergarouët with her aunt's fortune, a rich Irish girl, or any other heiress,—it was a matter of indifference to the baroness; she knew nothing of love; she, like all those about her, looked upon marriage as a means of acquiring fortune. Passion was unknown to these Catholic hearts, to these old people whose minds were bent exclusively upon God, the king, their salvation and their fortune. No one will be surprised therefore at the gravity of the thoughts that served as an accompaniment to the wounded feelings in this mother's heart, who lived as much for her son's material interests as for his affection. If the young household would listen to the voice of wisdom, the Du Guénics in the second generation,

by enduring privation, by economizing as people can economize in the provinces, might redeem their estates and regain the lustre of wealth. The baroness hoped for a long life in order to see the dawn of better days. Mademoiselle du Guénic had understood and acquiesced in this plan, which Mademoiselle des Touches was now threatening to overturn. The baroness in dismay heard the clock strike twelve; for another hour she was a prey to horrible terrors, for at the stroke of one, Calyste had not appeared.

"Would he stay there?" she said to herself. "It would be the first time. Poor child!"

At that moment Calyste's step woke the echoes of the lane. The poor mother, in whose heart joy took the place of anxiety, flew from the hall to the gate and opened it for her son.

"Oh!" cried Calyste in a distressed tone, "why do you sit up for me, dearest mother? I have my key and a tinder-box."

"You know, my child, that it is impossible for me to sleep when you are out," said she, kissing him.

When the baroness was in the hall, she looked at her son, to divine, from the expression of his face, his evening's experiences; but he caused her, as always, the emotion that habit does not lessen, and that all fond mothers feel at the sight of the human masterpiece which they have made and which dims their sight for a moment.

In addition to the black eyes, full of energy and

sunlight, which he inherited from his father, Calyste had his mother's lovely fair hair, aquiline nose, beautiful mouth, short fingers, smooth skin, and delicate, pure complexion. Although he greatly resembled a girl disguised as a man, he was as strong as Hercules. His muscles were as elastic and powerful as steel springs, and the singular contrast afforded by his black eyes was not without charm. His beard had not yet grown. Such delay in that respect denotes great longevity, so it is said. The chevalier was dressed in a short frock coat of black velvet, like his mother's dress, and embellished with silver buttons; he wore a blue silk neckerchief, pretty gaiters and pantaloons of a grayish drill. His snow-white forehead seemed to bear the marks of great fatigue, and yet it only indicated the weight of depressing thoughts. As she had no reason to suspect the pangs that were devouring Calyste's heart, the mother attributed this fleeting change in his expression to happiness. Nevertheless, Calyste was as handsome as a Greek god, but handsome without conceit; in the first place, he was used to seeing his mother, and in the second place, he gave but little thought to beauty which he knew to be unavailing.

"And so," she thought, "those lovely, pure cheeks, in which the rich young blood flows freely through a network of countless veins, belong to another woman, who is mistress too of that girlish brow! Passion will distort it and dim those beautiful eyes, humid as a child's!"

This bitter thought oppressed the baroness's heart and spoiled her pleasure. It may appear strange to those versed in arithmetic that, in a family of six persons, compelled to live upon an income of three thousand francs, the son should have a velvet coat and the mother a velvet dress; but Fanny O'Brien had wealthy aunts and relatives in London, who recalled themselves to the Breton baroness's memory by occasional presents. Several of her sisters, who had married well, were sufficiently interested in Calyste to be on the lookout for an heiress for him, knowing him to be as handsome and noble a youth as Fanny, their exiled favorite, was a lovely and noble woman.

"You stayed at Les Touches longer than you did last night, my darling," said the mother at last, in a trembling voice.

"Yes, dear mother," he replied, without vouchsafing any explanation.

This curt reply brought a cloud to the baroness's brow and she postponed the explanation until the morrow. When mothers conceive such anxious thoughts as those that oppressed the baroness at that moment, they almost tremble before their sons, they feel instinctively the effects of the great emancipation of love, they realize all that that sentiment is going to take from them; but at the same time, they derive some pleasure from the knowledge that their sons are happy: there is a sort of battle in their hearts. Although the result may be that their son increases his stature, becomes more of a man, real

mothers do not relish this tacit abdication; they prefer their sons to remain small and under their wing. Therein, perhaps, lies the secret of a mother's preference for a weak, disgraced or unfortunate child.

"You are tired, dear child, go to bed," said she, restraining her tears.

When a mother does not know everything that her son does, she thinks that all is lost, if she loves as dearly as Fanny did, and is loved as she was. The patient endeavors of twenty years might be made useless. This masterpiece of noble, virtuous, and religious education, Calyste, might be ruined forever; the happiness of her life, so carefully prepared, might be destroyed forever by a woman.

The next day Calyste slept until noon, for his mother gave orders that he should not be awakened; and Mariotte served to the spoiled child his breakfast in bed. The inflexible, quasi-monastic rules by which the hours for meals were regulated were set aside at the caprice of the chevalier. So, when they wanted to obtain Mademoiselle du Guénic's bunch of keys in order to procure something outside of the regular refection that would have necessitated interminable explanations, there was no other way than by pretending that Calyste had a fancy for it.

About one o'clock, the baron, his wife and mademoiselle were assembled in the living-room, for they dined at three. The baroness had taken up *La Quotidienne* and was reading the rest of it to her husband, who was always a little wider awake before his meals. Just as Madame du Guénic had

finished, she heard her son's step on the second floor, and she let the paper fall, saying:

"Calyste is probably going to dine at Les Touches again to-day; he is dressing."

"What harm if it amuses the child?" said the old maid, taking a silver whistle from her pocket and whistling.

Mariotte passed through the turret and appeared in the doorway, which was hidden by a portière of the same silk material as the curtains.

"If you please," said she, "do you wish anything?"

"The chevalier dines at Les Touches, don't cook the fish."

"But we don't know yet," said the baroness.

"You seem annoyed about it, sister, I can tell from your tone," said the blind woman.

"Monsieur Grimont has finally learned some very grave facts about Mademoiselle des Touches, who has changed our dear Calyste sadly within a year."

"In what?" the baron inquired.

"Why, he reads all kinds of books."

"Aha!" said the baron, "then that's the reason he neglects the hunt and his horse."

"Her morals are reprehensible and she assumes a man's name," Madame du Guénic continued.

"A nom de guerre," rejoined the old man. "I was called *L'Intimé*, the Comte de Fontaine *Grand-Jacques*, the Marquis de Montauran *Le Gars*. I was the friend of *Ferdinand*, who stood out for the

king as I did. Those were the good old times! we fired our muskets, and we amused ourselves all the same, one way and another."

This reminiscence of war, which took the place of paternal anxiety, saddened Fanny for a moment. The curé's disclosures and her son's failure to confide in her had prevented her from sleeping.

"If Monsieur le Chevalier should fall in love with Mademoiselle des Touches, where would be the harm?" said Mariotte. "The hussy has thirty thousand crowns a year, and she's beautiful."

"What's that you say, Mariotte?" cried the old man. "A Du Guénic marry a Des Touches! The Des Touches hadn't risen to be our squires when Du Guesclin looked upon an alliance with us as a signal honor."

"A woman with a man's name—Camille Maupin!" said the baroness.

"The Maupins are an old family," said the old man; "they're from Normandie, and bear *gules with three*—" He paused. "But she can't be a Des Touches and a Maupin at the same time."

"She calls herself Maupin on the stage."

"A Des Touches could never be an actress," said the old man. "If I didn't know you, Fanny, I should think you were mad."

"She writes plays, books," said the baroness.

"Books?" exclaimed the old man, looking at his wife in as great surprise as if she had spoken of a miracle. "I have heard it said that Mademoiselle Scudéri and Madame de Sévigné wrote, and it is not

much to their credit; but for such prodigies nothing less than Louis XIV. and his court would suffice."

"You dine at Les Touches, don't you, monsieur?" said Mariotte to Calyste, who appeared at that moment.

"Probably," the young man replied.

Mariotte was not inquisitive, she was one of the family; she went out without seeking to hear the question Madame du Guénic was about to put to Calyste.

"You are going to Les Touches again, *my* Calyste?" She emphasized the word *my*. "And Les Touches is not a virtuous, decent house. Its mistress leads a wild life, she will corrupt our Calyste. Camille Maupin has given him many books to read, she has had many love affairs! And you know all this, bad boy, and you said nothing of it to your old friends!"

"The chevalier is close-mouthed," interposed the father; "an old-fashioned virtue."

"Too close-mouthed," said the jealous baroness, observing the flush that overspread her son's brow.

"My dear mother," said Calyste, kneeling at her feet, "I do not think it is necessary to make public my defeats. Mademoiselle des Touches—or Camille Maupin, if you choose—rejected my suit a year and a half ago, at the time of her last stay here. She laughed at me mildly then; she said she was old enough to be my mother; a woman of forty who loved a minor committed a sort of incest and

that she was incapable of such depravity. In fact, she made a thousand jocose remarks, which crushed me completely, for she is as bright and witty as an angel. And so, when she saw me weeping scalding tears, she consoled me by offering me her friendship in the noblest way. She has even more heart than talent; she is as generous as you are. I am like her child now. When she came back here and I learned that she loved another man, I resigned myself to my fate. Don't repeat the calumnies that are current about her; Camille is an artist, she has genius, and leads one of those exceptional existences which cannot fairly be judged as ordinary existences are."

"My child," said the devout Fanny, "nothing can exempt a woman from conducting herself as the Church directs. She fails in her duty toward God and toward society by abjuring the beneficent religion of her sex. A woman sins even in going to the theatre; but to write the impious things that the actors repeat, to go about the world, sometimes with an enemy of the Pope, sometimes with a musician, —ah! you will find it difficult, Calyste, to convince me that such performances are deeds of faith, hope or charity. Her fortune was given her by God to do good with; what use does she make of it?"

Calyste suddenly sprang to his feet, looked his mother in the face and said:

"Mother, Camille is my friend; I cannot hear her spoken of in this way, for I would give my life for her."

"Your life?" said the baroness, looking at her son

with an expression of dismay. "Your life belongs to us all!"

"My handsome nephew said something then that I don't understand," said the old blind woman softly, turning toward him.

"Where did he learn it?" said the mother. "At Les Touches."

"But, my darling mother, she found me as ignorant as a carp."

"You knew all that was essential since you knew the duties religion teaches us," the baroness replied. "Ah! that woman will destroy your noble, blessed faith."

The old maid rose and extended her hand solemnly toward her brother, who had fallen asleep.

"Calyste," said she, in a voice that came from the heart, "your father never opened any books, he speaks the Breton patois, but he fought for his king and his God in time of danger. Educated men did the harm and the learned gentlemen deserted their country. Learn the lesson, if you choose."

She resumed her seat and her knitting with the activity due to internal emotion. Calyste was deeply impressed by this discourse *à la Phocion*.

"Indeed, my angel, I have a presentiment that some misfortune will come to you in that house," said the mother in an altered voice, her eyes filling with tears.

"Who causes Fanny to weep?" cried the old man, waking with a start at the sound of his wife's voice.

He glanced at his sister, his son and the baroness successively.

"What is it?"

"Nothing, my dear," the baroness replied.

"Mamma," said Calyste in a low voice in his mother's ear, "it is impossible for me to explain at this moment; but this evening we will have a talk together. When you know all, you will bless Mademoiselle des Touches."

"Mothers do not like to curse," replied the baroness, "and I would not curse the woman who truly loved my Calyste."

The young man bade his old father adieu and left the house. The baron and his wife left their seats to watch him cross the courtyard, open the gate and disappear. The baroness did not take up the newspaper again, she was too deeply moved. In that tranquil, unruffled life, the short discussion that had just taken place was equivalent to a quarrel in another family. Although somewhat allayed, the mother's anxiety was not by any means dissipated. Whither was this friendship, that might claim Calyste's life and endanger it, likely to lead him? How could the baroness have reason to bless Mademoiselle des Touches? These two questions were as momentous to that simple heart as the fiercest revolution is to trained diplomatists. Camille Maupin was a revolution in that calm, sunny household.

"I am afraid that woman is spoiling him for us," she said, taking up the newspaper once more.

LES TOUCHES DISCUSSED AT DU GUÉNIC'S

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ADRIEN MOREAU

"My dear Fanny," said the old baron with a knowing air, "you are too much of an angel to understand these matters. Mademoiselle des Touches is as black as a crow, they say, and as strong as a Turk; she is forty years old and our Calyste is paying court to her. He will tell a few very honorable little fibs to conceal his good fortune. Let him amuse himself with his first deception in the matter of love."

"If it were any other woman—"

"But, my dear Fanny, if the woman were a saint, she wouldn't accept our son's homage."

The baroness again took up her journal.

"I will go and see her," said the old man, "and then I can tell you all about her."

This remark can have no bearing except for reference. After reading Camille Maupin's biography, imagine the old baron engaged in a contest with that illustrious woman.

*

The town of Guérande which for two months past had seen Calyste, its flower and its pride, going every day, in the morning or evening, and often both morning and evening, to Les Touches, believed that Mademoiselle des Touches was passionately in love with the handsome boy, and that she was practising witchcraft upon him. More than one maiden and more than one young woman were asking themselves what privileges old women enjoyed that they could exert such absolute dominion over an angel. And so, when Calyste passed along Grand Rue to leave the town by the Le Croisic gate, more than one pair of eyes were fixed upon him.

It becomes necessary now to explain the rumors that were hovering over the personage Calyste was going to visit. These rumors, added to by Breton gossip, envenomed by public ignorance, had reached the curé's ears. The tax-collector, the justice of the peace, the chief of the customs service at Saint-Nazaire and other well-informed people of the district had not removed Abbé Grimont's apprehensions by telling him of the strange life of the female artist who concealed her identity under the name of Camille Maupin. She did not devour little children, she did not kill her slaves like Cleopatra, she did not order men to be thrown into the river as the heroine of *La Tour de Nesle* is falsely accused of

doing; but, in the eyes of Abbé Grimont, this monstrous creature, who partook of the nature of the siren and the atheist, formed an immoral combination of woman and philosopher, and outraged all the social laws devised to repress or to utilize the infirmities of the fair sex.

Just as Clara Gazul is the feminine pseudonym of a man of intellect, George Sand, the masculine pseudonym of a woman of genius, so Camille Maupin was the mask behind which a charming young woman long concealed her identity—a Breton of excellent family, named Félicité des Touches, the woman who caused the Baronne du Guénic and the good curé of Guérande such keen anxiety. This family has no connection with the Des Touches of Touraine, to which the Regent's ambassador belongs,—a man more celebrated to-day by reason of his literary fame than by reason of his diplomatic talents.

Camille Maupin, one of the few famous women of the nineteenth century, was long supposed to be a man because of the virility of her early performances. Everybody is familiar to-day with the two volumes of plays, not of a nature to be put upon the stage, which were written in the style of Shakespeare or Lope de Vega and which created a sort of literary revolution when they were published in 1822, at the time that the great question of the comparative merits of romanticists and classicists was being hotly discussed in the newspapers, at the clubs and at the Academy. Since then, Camille

Maupin has produced several plays and a novel which have not belied the success achieved by her first production, now too generally forgotten.

If we explain by what chain of circumstances the masculine incarnation of a young girl was brought about, and how Félicité des Touches became a man and an author; why, more fortunate than Madame de Staël, she remained free and is thus the more pardonable for her celebrity—shall we not thereby gratify the curiosity of many readers and justify one of those monstrosities which rear their heads in the history of mankind like monumental columns, and whose glory is exaggerated by their rarity? for we can hardly count twenty great women in twenty centuries. And so, although she plays only a secondary part in this narrative, inasmuch as she had great influence over Calyste and plays an important rôle in the literary history of our epoch, no one will regret having paused before this figure a little longer than the modern poetic art would warrant.

Mademoiselle Félicité des Touches was left an orphan in 1793. Her property thus escaped the confiscation which her father and mother would doubtless have incurred. The former died on the tenth of August, slain on the threshold of the palace among the defenders of the king, to whose side his rank of major in the Gardes de la Porte summoned him. Her brother, a young member of the body-guard, was massacred at Les Carmes. Mademoiselle des Touches was two years old when her

mother died of grief a few days after this second disaster. On her deathbed, Madame des Touches entrusted her daughter to her sister, a nun at the convent of Chelles. Madame de Faucombe, the nun, wisely took the orphan to Faucombe, an estate of considerable size near Nantes, belonging to Madame des Touches, and took up her abode there with three sisters from the convent. During the last days of the Terror, the mob demolished the château, and seized the nuns and Mademoiselle des Touches, who were cast into prison on a charge of having received emissaries from Pitt and Coburg. The Ninth Thermidor set them free. Félicité's aunt died of fright. Two of the sisters left France; the third placed the little Des Touches in the care of her nearest relative, Monsieur de Faucombe, her maternal great-uncle, who lived at Nantes; she then joined her companions in exile.

Monsieur de Faucombe, an old man of sixty, had married a young wife to whom he left the management of his affairs. He devoted all his attention to archæology, a passion, or, to speak more correctly, one of the manias which assist old men to imagine that they are still alive. His ward's education was left entirely to chance. Receiving but little oversight from a young woman devoted to the pleasures of the imperial régime, Félicité brought herself up like a boy. She kept Monsieur de Faucombe company in his library and read whatever she chose to read. She acquired a theoretical knowledge of life, therefore, and had no innocence of mind, although

she remained chaste. Her intelligence floated among the impurities of knowledge, and her heart remained pure. She became surprisingly well-informed, incited by a passion for reading and assisted by an excellent memory. Thus, at eighteen, she knew as much as young authors of to-day are likely to know before beginning to write. The prodigious amount of reading she accomplished, held her passions in check much better than life at a convent, where the imaginations of young girls are inflamed. The brain stuffed to bursting with undigested, unclassified knowledge, dominated the childish heart. This depravity of the intelligence, entirely without effect upon the chastity of the body, would have astounded philosophers or observers, if anyone at Nantes had suspected Mademoiselle des Touches' capacity. The result was inversely proportioned to the cause; Félicité had no inclination toward what was evil; she imagined everything in thought, but abstained from deeds; she enchanted the aged Faucombe and assisted him in his labors; she wrote three of the excellent old gentleman's works, which he believed to be his own, for his mental paternity was blind also.

Such hard work, disproportioned to the development of a young girl, had its due effect: Félicité fell sick, her blood became heated and she seemed to be threatened with inflammation of the lungs. The doctors prescribed horseback riding and social distraction. Mademoiselle des Touches became a very accomplished horsewoman, and was quite well again

in a few months. At eighteen, she appeared in society, where she produced so great a sensation that at Nantes she was never spoken of except as the lovely Mademoiselle des Touches; but she was insensible to the adoration she inspired; she had gone thither in obedience to a sentiment imperishable in a woman, however mentally superior she may be.

Wounded by her aunt and her cousins, who made sport of her work and bantered her upon her repugnance to society, assuming that she had not the art of making herself agreeable, she determined to appear in the guise of a light-headed flirt,—a woman, in a word. Félicité anticipated some interchange of ideas, some attraction in harmony with her exalted intellect and with the extent of her knowledge; she had a feeling of disgust as she listened to the commonplaces of conversation, the idiotic phrases of gallantry, and was especially repelled by the military aristocrats to whom everybody gave way at that period. Naturally, she had neglected ornamental accomplishments. When she saw that she was inferior to the dolls who played the piano and made themselves entertaining by singing *romanzas*, she determined to be a musician: she withdrew into complete seclusion and began to study persistently, under the direction of the best master in the city. She was rich, so to the unbounded amazement of the city she sent for Steibelt to give her the finishing touches. That princely extravagance is still talked about there. The master's visit to Nantes cost her

twelve thousand francs. Eventually, she became a consummate musician. Later, at Paris, she studied harmony and counterpoint, and composed the music of two operas, which had the greatest success; but the public was never taken into her confidence. Those operas are supposed to have been produced by Conti, one of the most eminent artists of our day; but this episode is connected with her heart story and will be explained later.

The mediocrity of provincial society was so wearisome to her, her mind was filled with such grand ideas, that she turned her back upon the salons after reappearing for a moment to eclipse all the women by her splendid beauty, to enjoy her triumph over the amateur musicians and to compel the adoration of the people of intellect; but, after she had demonstrated her power to her two cousins and driven two lovers to despair, she returned to her books, her piano, the works of Beethoven and old De Faucombe.

In 1812, she became twenty-one years old and the archæologist settled his guardianship account with her; thus, from that year, she assumed the management of her fortune, consisting of fifteen thousand francs a year from Les Touches, her father's property; of twelve thousand a year then yielded by the Faucombe property, which would be increased one-third on the renewal of the leases; and of three hundred thousand francs saved by her guardian. Of provincial life, Félicité retained nothing but a clear understanding of the word fortune and that tendency

to administrative shrewdness which perhaps re-establishes the equilibrium disturbed by the movement of capital toward Paris. She took her three hundred thousand francs from the house with whom the archæologist had placed them, and invested them in the public funds at the time of the disasters, consequent upon the retreat from Moscow. She received thirty thousand francs additional income. After all her expenses were paid, she had fifty thousand a year to invest. A young woman of such calibre at twenty-one was the equal of a man of thirty. Her mind had expanded enormously and long-continued habit of criticism enabled her to form a sound judgment of men, art, business and politics. She then determined to leave Nantes, but her former guardian, De Faucombe, fell sick of the malady that carried him off. She was like a wife to the old man and nursed him for eighteen months with the devotion of a guardian angel, and closed his eyes as Napoléon was struggling with Europe over the body of France. She thereupon postponed her departure for Paris until the end of that struggle. Being a royalist, she hurried to the capital to be present at the return of the Bourbons. She was received there by the Grandlieus, with whom she had ties of kinship; but the disasters of the twentieth of March occurred and all her prospects were in suspense. She was able to watch close at hand the last expiring image of the Empire, admire the *Grand Armée* which assembled on the Champ de Mars, as in an amphitheatre, to salute its Cæsar before going to its death

at Waterloo. Félicité's noble, exalted imagination was thrilled by that magic spectacle. The political commotion, the marvelous transformations of that three months' tragedy which history has named the Hundred Days, engrossed her thoughts and preserved her from all passion of the heart, amid an upheaval which dispersed the royalist society in which she had made her first appearance.

The Grandlieus had followed the Bourbons to Ghent, leaving their house to Mademoiselle des Touches. Félicité, who would accept no subordinate position, purchased for a hundred and thirty thousand francs one of the finest mansions on Rue du Mont-Blanc, and installed herself there when the Bourbons returned in 1815. The garden alone is worth two millions to-day. Being accustomed to manage her own affairs, Félicité soon familiarized herself with a department of activity which seems exclusively given over to men.

In 1816, she was twenty-five years old. She knew nothing of marriage, but had simply formed her own conception of it; she judged it according to its causes instead of watching its effects, and saw only its drawbacks. Her superior mind revolted at the thought of the abdication with which a married woman begins life; she had an exalted idea of the value of independence and was repelled by the thought of the cares of maternity. It is necessary to give these details in order to justify the anomalies that distinguish Camille Maupin from other people. She never knew her father or mother, and was her

own mistress from childhood; her guardian was an old archæologist, chance cast her lines in the domain of science and the imagination, in the literary world, instead of confining them within the circle marked out by the useless education ordinarily given to women, by maternal instruction concerning the toilet, hypocritical morality, and the Amazonian accomplishments of the sex. Long before she became famous, anyone could see at the first glance that she had never played with dolls.

Toward the close of the year 1817, Félicité des Touches began to notice in her personal appearance traces, not of decay, but of fatigue. She realized that her beauty was destined to fade as a result of her persistent celibacy, but she desired to remain beautiful, for at that time she relied upon her beauty. Science informed her of nature's decree concerning her creations which perish as much from misinterpretation of her laws as from their abuse. Her aunt's wasted features came to her mind and made her shudder. As between marriage and passion she determined to remain free; but she was no longer indifferent to the homage laid at her feet.

At the time when this narrative begins, she was almost as she was in 1817. Eighteen years had passed her by with respect. At forty, she could safely claim to be only twenty-five. And so to describe her in 1836, is to represent her as she was in 1817. Women who know the conditions of temperament and beauty which enable their sex to resist the ravages of time will understand how and

why Félicité enjoyed so great a privilege, by studying a portrait for which the most brilliant tones of the palette and the richest of frames are reserved.

Bretagne presents for solution a curious problem in the predominance of brown hair, brown eyes and dark complexions in a country very near England, where the atmospheric conditions vary so little. Is this problem connected with the great question of the races? does it depend upon physical differences thus far undiscovered? Some day, perhaps, scientific men will investigate the causes of this peculiarity, which ceases in the adjoining province, in Normandie. Until solved, this curious fact confronts us; blondes are very rare among the women of Bretagne, almost all of whom have the sparkling eyes of the women of the South; but instead of presenting the tall stature and serpentine outlines of Italy or Spain, they are generally small, thickset, well-rounded, stout, except among the upper classes, which cross and recross through their aristocratic alliances.

Mademoiselle des Touches, like a true Breton of high lineage, is of medium height; she is not five feet tall, but she is universally taken to be more than that. The error is due to her figure, which increases her apparent height. She has the complexion peculiar to beautiful Italian women, olive brown by daylight and white by artificial light; you would say it was animated ivory. The sunlight glides over her flesh as over a polished body and makes it glisten; some violent emotion is necessary

to summon a faint flush to her cheeks, and it soon disappears. This peculiarity imparts to her face the impassibility of the savage. The face is long rather than oval, and resembles that of one of the lovely figures of Isis on the bas-reliefs found in Ægina. You might compare her head in purity of outline to the Sphinx's heads, polished by the fire of the desert, caressed by the fierce heat of the Egyptian sun. The complexion harmonizes with the regular shape of the head. The hair, black as jet and very abundant, falls in braids along her neck like the headdress with two fillets, of the statues at Memphis, and corresponds admirably with the generally severe character of the figure. The brow is full and broad, bulging at the temples, relieved by flat surfaces upon which the light rests, and somewhat harsh of outline, like that of the huntress Diana: a powerful, self-willed, but silent and tranquil brow. The arch of the eyebrows, strongly marked, extends above eyes which gleam at times like fixed stars. The white of the eye is neither of a bluish tinge nor marked with red veins, nor of pure white; it has the consistency of the cornea, but is of a warmer tone. The pupil is surrounded by an orange circle. It is bronze surrounded with gold, but both gold and bronze are animate. The pupil has great depth. It is not lined, as in some eyes, with a sort of foil that reflects the light, and makes them resemble a cat's eyes or a tiger's; it has not that terrible inflexibility that makes sensitive people shudder; but its depths are infinite, just as the splendor of eyes seen

in a mirror is circumscribed. The observer's glance may lose itself in that mind, which concentrates its forces and withdraws from sight as swiftly as it gushes forth from those velvety eyes. In a moment of passion, Camille Maupin's eye is sublime; the golden blaze of her glance lights up the yellow white of the eye, and the whole organ flashes fire; but, in repose, it is dull and lustreless, and the torpor of meditation often imparts to it an appearance of idiocy; when the light dies out in the eye, the lines of the face become proportionately joyless. The lashes are short, but as thick and black as the ermine's tail. The lids are dark and streaked with red filaments, which give them charm and strength at once—two qualities seldom found in the same woman. Below the eyes there is not the slightest trace of crow's foot or wrinkle. There, again, you find the granite of the Egyptian statue softened by time. But the prominence of the cheek bones, although not obtrusive, is more pronounced than in other women and completes the general impression of strength of character suggested by the figure. The nose, which is short and thin, is pierced with nostrils passionately dilated to a sufficient extent to allow a glimpse of the delicate pink flush of their lining. The nose is a fitting continuation of the forehead, to which it is joined by a most graceful line; it is perfectly white at its beginning as at its end, and its end is endowed with a sort of mobility which performs marvels of expression at times when Camille loses her temper, flies into a passion

or rises in revolt. At that point above all others, as Talma has observed, the wrath or irony of great minds is displayed. Immobility of the nostrils denotes a sort of insensibility. The nose of a miser never throbs; it is always drawn in like his mouth; everything is tightly closed in his face as in himself. The mouth, arched at the corners, is of a brilliant red; the blood abounds therein, and furnishes the living, thinking dye that imparts so much charm to that mouth and may reassure the lover dismayed by the majestic gravity of the face. The upper lip is thin, the furrow that connects it with the nose descends quite low as in a bow, giving a peculiar emphasis to her disdain. Camille has little to do in order to give expression to her wrath. That attractive lip is bordered by the broad red line of the lower lip, which tells of great kindness of heart and is running over with love, and which Phidias seems to have placed there like the edge of an open pomegranate, whose coloring it has. The turned-up chin is a little fat, but projects in a way that expresses determination, and fittingly completes this royal, if not divine, profile. We must not forget to say that there is a faint line of down immediately below the nose. Nature would have gone astray had she failed to place that soft haze there. The ear has delicate, scroll-like curves, a token of many hidden charms. The bust is ample. The waist is slender and shapely. The hips are not prominent, but they are graceful. The fall of the loins is superb, and reminds one more of *Bacchus*

than of the *Venus Callipygos.* That is the dividing line that separates almost all illustrious women from the rest of their sex; they bear a vague resemblance to man in that particular, they have neither the elasticity nor the ease of movement of the woman nature has destined for maternity; their gait is less graceful. This observation is two-sided, so to speak; it may be duplicated in regard to those shrewd, astute, false, cowardly men, whose hips are almost like women's. Instead of being hollowed out at the nape, Camille's neck presents a swelling outline which connects the shoulders with the head, without undulations—the most convincing evidence of strength of character. From time to time, the neck displays athletically magnificent folds. The superbly-shaped shoulders seem to belong to a woman of colossal size. The arms are built upon a powerful model, ending in wrists as slender as an Englishwoman's, and small, plump, dimpled hands, embellished with almond-shaped pink nails filed at the edges, and of a whiteness indicating that the plump, solid, well-proportioned body is of a very different tone from the face.

The determined, repellent carriage of the head is modified by the mobility of the lips and their changing expression, and by the artistic play of the nostrils. But despite these seductive promises, carefully concealed from the profane, there is something provoking in the tranquil expression of the face. Melancholy and grave rather than gracious, it wears the dejected expression due to constant

meditation. Mademoiselle des Touches listens more than she talks. She terrifies by her silence and by her deeply penetrating glance. No one, among really educated persons, has ever seen her without thinking of the original Cleopatra, the little brunette who almost changed the face of the world; but, in Camille, the animal is so complete, so well put together, and of such a leonine nature, that any man, however much of a Turk he may be, regrets that such a mind is placed in such a body, and would like her to be all woman.

Everyone trembles when he is confronted by the monstrous corruption of a diabolic mind. Do not cold analysis and positiveness of ideas enlighten the passions in such an one? Does not this woman judge instead of feeling, or,—a still more terrible phenomenon,—does she not judge and feel at the same time? Able to do anything with her brain, is she likely to stop where other women stop? Does her intellectual power leave her heart weak? Has she the power of fascination? Does she descend to the touching nothings with which women attract, amuse and interest the men they love? Does she not cast aside a sentiment when it does not answer the requirements of the infinite ideas upon which she caresses and feasts her eyes? Who can fill the abysses of her eyes? You have a vague fear of finding in her some unsubdued virgin force. The strong woman should be only a symbol, she inspires terror when seen in flesh and blood.

Camille Maupin is, in some slight degree, a living

copy of Schiller's Isis, who was concealed within the temple, and at whose feet the priests found dying the bold athletes who had consulted her. The adventures which were looked upon by society as authentic, and which Camille did not disavow, confirm the questions suggested by her appearance. But may it not be that she loves calumny? The character of her beauty has not been without influence upon her reputation: it has been of service to her, just as her fortune and her rank have enabled her to maintain a position in the forefront of society. When a sculptor desires to produce a perfect statue of Bretagne, he can do no better than to copy Mademoiselle des Touches. Such a full-blooded, passionate temperament as hers is the only one that can resist the action of time. The constant nourishment of the flesh beneath that varnished skin is the only weapon Nature has given women with which to drive away wrinkles, which, however, Camille's impassibility of feature would also tend to prevent.

In 1817, this charming young woman opened her salon to the artists, famous authors, scholars and publicists toward whom her instincts attracted her. She kept a salon like Baron Gérard's, where the aristocracy mingled with illustrious men of every degree, and where the *élite* of Parisian womankind was to be found. Mademoiselle des Touches' connections and her fortune, increased by the property bequeathed to her by her aunt, the nun, assisted in the undertaking, so difficult at Paris, of creating a social circle for herself. Her independence was one

of the reasons of her success. Many ambitious mothers conceived the hope of marrying their sons to her—sons whose fortune was not in perfect accord with the splendor of their escutcheons. Some peers of France, allured by an income of eighty thousand francs and seduced by the magnificence of her establishment, brought their most crabbed and most exacting female relatives thither. The diplomatic world, which seeks mental entertainment, went there and enjoyed itself.

Mademoiselle des Touches, surrounded by so many interests, was enabled thus to study the various comedies that passion, avarice and ambition lead even the most high-minded men to play. She learned early in life to see the world as it is, and was fortunate enough not to fall a victim at once to the engrossing love that absorbs a woman's mind and faculties, and thereupon prevents her from judging sanely. Ordinarily a woman feels, enjoys and judges successively; thence, her life is divided into three distinct periods, the last of which coincides with the melancholy epoch of old age. In the case of Mademoiselle des Touches, this order was reversed. Her youth was enveloped in the clouds of science and the cold mists of reflection. This transposition helps to explain the extraordinary character of her existence and the nature of her talent. She was observing men at an age when most women have eyes for but one man, she despised what they admire, she detected falsehood in the flatteries they accept as truths, she laughed

at the things that make them grave. This inversion of the natural order of things lasted a long while, but it had a terrible ending: she was destined to find her first love in her heart, young and fresh, at a time when women are called upon by nature to renounce love.

Her first *liaison* was so secret that no one knew of it. Félicité, like all women when they yield to the impulses of the heart, was led to expect charm of mind as a result of charm of body; she fell in love with a face, and learned by experience the idiocy of a libertine who saw nothing but the woman in her. She was some time recovering from her disgust and from that insane connection.

A man divined her suffering and consoled her without ulterior motives, or at least was able to conceal his projects. Félicité thought she had found the nobility of heart and mind that the dandy lacked. The man in question possessed one of the most original minds of the time. He himself wrote under a pseudonym and his first writings proclaimed him a worshiper of Italy. Félicité must travel or run the risk of perpetuating her ignorance of the only subject on which she was uninformed. This sceptical, irreverent man took her with him to make acquaintance with the fatherland of the arts. The celebrated unknown may well be considered the master and the creator of Camille Maupin. He arranged her vast stores of knowledge, added to them by the study of the masterpieces with which Italy abounds, gave her the ingenious, delicate, profound

epigrammatic tone peculiarly characteristic of his own talent which is always a little odd in form, but which Camille Maupin modified by the delicacy of sentiment and happy turn of phrase natural to women; he inculcated in her a taste for the great works in English and German literature and taught her those two languages during their travels.

At Rome, in 1820, Mademoiselle des Touches was deserted for an Italian woman. Except for that calamity, perhaps she never would have become famous. Napoléon dubbed Misfortune the midwife of Genius. That occurrence inspired in Mademoiselle des Touches' mind forever that contempt for humanity which makes her so strong. Félicité died and Camille was born. She returned to Paris with Conti, the great musician, for whom she wrote the librettos for two operas; but she was dead to illusions and became, unknown to society, a sort of female Don Juan, without debts or conquests. Encouraged by success, she published her two volumes of plays, which, at one stroke, placed Camille Maupin among the illustrious anonymous authors. She told the tale of her betrayed passion in an admirable little romance, one of the chefs-d'œuvre of the time. This book, dangerous as an exemplar, was placed beside *Adolphe*, a horrible lamentation, whose very antipodes is found in Camille's work. The delicacy of her literary metamorphosis was not as yet understood. Some fine minds alone detected therein that generosity which delivers a man to the critics and rescues a woman from renown by

permitting her to remain obscure. Notwithstanding her wishes, her celebrity increased day by day, as much through the influence of her salon as by her repartees, the justice of her judgments and the solidity of her knowledge. She became an authority, her good things were repeated, she could not shirk the functions with which she was invested by Parisian society. She became an acknowledged exception. Society bowed before the talent and the fortune of this extraordinary creature; it recognized and gave its sanction to her independence, the women admired her wit and the men, her beauty. Moreover, her conduct conformed to all the social conveniences. Her friendships seemed to be purely Platonic. There was nothing of the female author about her. Mademoiselle des Touches was charming as a society woman, as occasion required, soft-voiced, indolent, coquettish, careful about her toilet, enchanted with the follies that fascinate women and poets. She understood perfectly that after Madame de Staël, there was no place in this age for a Sappho, and Ninon could not exist in Paris without great noblemen and a licentious court. She is the Ninon of the intellect, she adores art and artists, she runs from the poet to the musician, from the sculptor to the prose writer. She is noble-hearted and generous to the point of credulity, she is so full of pity for misfortune, so full of disdain for fortunate folk.

She has lived since 1830 in a select circle of proved friends, who love one another dearly and esteem one another. As far removed from the noisy

career of Madame de Staël as from political strife, she makes great sport of Camille Maupin, that younger brother of George Sand, whom she calls her brother Cain, for that more recent renown has quite eclipsed her own. Mademoiselle des Touches admires her fortunate rival with angelic good humor, with no feeling of jealousy and without reserve.

Down to the moment that this narrative begins, she had the happiest existence that a woman strong enough to look after herself, can imagine. Between 1817 and 1834, she came to Les Touches five or six times. Her first sojourn there was after her first disillusionment, in 1818. Her house at Les Touches was uninhabitable; she sent her man of affairs to Guérande and occupied his quarters at Les Touches. She had no suspicion then of her glory to come, she was depressed, she saw no one, she wished in some sort to search her own heart after that great catastrophe. She wrote to one of her female friends at Paris concerning her intentions, and respecting the necessary furniture to put Les Touches in order. The furniture came by water to Nantes, was carried thence to Le Croisic in a small boat, and thence, not without difficulty, across the sands to Les Touches. She sent for workmen from Paris and took up her abode at Les Touches, which, as a whole, seemed to please her immensely. She desired to be able to meditate there upon the events of life, as if she were in a private monastery.

At the beginning of winter she returned to Paris. Thereupon the little town of Guérande was

convulsed with diabolic curiosity; nothing was talked about there but Mademoiselle des Touches' Asiatic magnificence. The notary, her man of business, issued permits to inspect Les Touches. People came from the village of Batz, from Le Croisic, from Savenay. This curiosity yielded to the families of the concierge and the gardener, in two years, the enormous sum of seventeen francs.

Mademoiselle did not return to Les Touches until two years later, on her return from Italy; she came by way of Le Croisic. For some time, nobody knew her at Guérande, which she visited with Conti the composer. Her successive appearances in the neighborhood aroused but little interest in the town of Guérande. Certainly no one besides her manager and the notary was in the secret of Camille Maupin's renown. At this time, however, the contagion of the new ideas had made some progress in Guérande, and several persons there knew of Mademoiselle des Touches' double existence. The postmaster received letters addressed to Camille Maupin at Les Touches. In a word, the veil was torn away.

In a country essentially Catholic, behind the times, full of prejudices, the strange life led by this illustrious woman was certain to give rise to such rumors as had alarmed Abbé Grimont, because it could never be understood; therefore it seemed a monstrous thing to everybody. Félicité was not alone at Les Touches, she had a guest. That guest was Claude Vignon, the arrogant, disdainful writer, who, although he writes nothing but criticisms, has

found means of impressing the public and literature with a general idea of his superiority. Félicité, who, for seven years, had received him as she had received a hundred others, authors, journalists, artists and men of the world,—who knew his aimless character, his indolence, his utter destitution, his recklessness and his disgust with everything, seemed disposed to make him her husband to judge from the manner in which she bore herself toward him. She explained her conduct, which was incomprehensible to her friends, by attributing it to ambition, to her terror at the thought of old age; she desired to entrust the remainder of her life to a man of superior mould for whom her fortune would be a stepping-stone, and who would keep alive her importance in the literary world. She had therefore brought Claude Vignon from Paris to Les Touches, as an eagle carries off a kid in its claws, to study him and to take some decided measures; but she was deceiving Calyste and Claude at the same time; she had no thought of marriage, she was a prey to the most violent convulsions that can agitate a mind as strong as hers, upon finding herself the dupe of her own intellect and her life illuminated too late by the sun of love, shining as it shines in the heart of a girl of twenty.

Let us cast a glance now at Camille's cloister.

Some few hundred yards from Guérande, the solid ground of Bretagne comes to an end and the salt marshes and sand dunes begin. You go down into the desert of sand which the sea has left like a belt

between it and the land, over a rough, washed-out road that has never seen a carriage. This desert comprises barren sand, ponds of irregular shape, bordered by marshy hummocks where the salt is gathered, and the little arm of the sea that separates the island of Le Croisic from the continent. As Le Croisic, although geographically a peninsula, is connected with Bretagne only by the beach that unites it with the village of Batz—barren, shifting sands that are very hard to cross—it may be considered an island.

At the spot where the road from Le Croisic to Guérande joins the upland road, stands a country house surrounded by an extensive garden, remarkable for its gnarled and distorted pine trees, some shaped like umbrellas, others almost stripped of their branches, and all displaying their reddish trunks in places where the bark has been torn off. These trees, victims of the tempest, have grown there despite the wind and sea, and may justly be said to prepare the mind for the melancholy and curious spectacle of the salt marshes and the dunes, which resemble a curdled sea. The house, well built of schistose stone set in mortar, and supported by granite quoins, is without any pretensions to architecture; it presents to the eye a bare wall, pierced at regular intervals by the window openings. The windows have large panes on the first floor and small squares on the ground floor. Above the first floor are attics below an enormous, high, pointed roof with two gables, and with two

round windows on each face. In each triangular gable end, a window opens its Cyclopean eye, to the west upon the sea, to the east upon Guérande.

One façade of the house overlooks the Guérande road and the other, the desert with Le Croisic at the further end. Beyond that little town stretches the open sea. A brook steals through an opening in the park wall, which the Le Croisic road skirts, crosses the road and loses itself among the sand wastes or in the little salt lake surrounded by the dunes and swamps, and produced by the irruption of the arm of the sea. A road some few fathoms in length, built over this broken ground, leads from the highway to the house. You enter through a great gate. The courtyard is surrounded by unpretentious rural outbuildings—a stable, a carriage-house, a house for the gardener, with a barnyard and its appurtenances close by, more for the use of the concierge than of the proprietor.

The grayish tones of the main building harmonize admirably with the landscape it overlooks. Its park is the oasis in this desert, on the outskirts of which the traveler finds a hut built of mud where the customs officers keep guard. This house without land, or whose land is located on the territory of Guérande, derives an income of ten thousand francs from the marshes, and the residue from farms scattered about on the upland.

Such is the fief of Les Touches, which the Revolution deprived of its feudal revenues. To-day, Les Touches is a rural estate simply, but the *paludiers*

continue to say the *château;* they would say *the seigneur* if the fief had not fallen to a woman. When Félicité determined to restore Les Touches, she was very careful, like the great artist she is, to change nothing in the desolate exterior which gives that solitary structure the appearance of a prison. The entrance gate only was embellished by the addition of two brick columns supporting a gallery beneath which a carriage can pass. The courtyard was paved.

The arrangement of the ground floor corresponds with that of the majority of country houses built a hundred years ago. Evidently, the house was constructed on the ruins of some little castle, which was perched there like a ring connecting Le Croisic and the village of Batz with Guérande, and exercised lordship over the marshes. A peristyle had been constructed at the foot of the staircase. First comes a large reception room with a wooden floor, in which Félicité placed a billiard table; then an immense salon with six windows, two of which, in the gable end, form doors leading down into the garden by some ten or more steps, and correspond, in the arrangement of the salon, to the doors leading to the billiard-room and the dining-room respectively. The kitchen is at the other end, connected with the dining-room by a butler's pantry. The stairway separates the billiard-room from the kitchen, which had a door into the peristyle; but Mademoiselle at once closed it up and opened another door into the courtyard.

The height of the rooms on this floor and their great size made it possible for Camille to display a noble simplicity in their treatment. She was careful not to fill them with valuable objects. The salon, which is painted gray throughout, is furnished in old mahogany and green silk, white dimity curtains with green borders at the windows, two consoles and a round table; in the centre is a carpet with a large square pattern; upon the huge mantelpiece with its enormous mirror is a clock representing the chariot of the sun, between two candelabra of the style in vogue under the Empire. The billiard-room has gray dimity curtains with green borders, and two divans. The furniture of the dining-room consists of four great mahogany dressers, a table, twelve mahogany chairs upholstered in horsehair cloth, and magnificent engravings by Audran in mahogany frames. From the centre of the ceiling hangs a graceful lantern, such as is seen in the halls of great hotels, containing two lamps. All the ceilings have projecting beams and are painted to represent the natural wood. The old staircase, which is of wood with heavy balusters, has a green carpet from top to bottom.

The first floor consists of two suites of apartments, separated by the stairway. Camille took for herself the one that looks upon the sea and marshes and dunes, and arranged the rooms thus: a small salon, a large bedroom, and two small rooms, one for a dressing-room and the other for a study. In the other part of the house on that floor she arranged

two apartments, each having a dressing-room and a reception-room. The servants' quarters are in the attics.

The two guest rooms were furnished at first with such things only as were absolutely necessary. The artistic and luxurious furnishings she had ordered from Paris were reserved for her own apartment. She desired to have the most fanciful creations of art before her eyes in that gloomy, depressing abode, in the midst of that gloomy, depressing region. Her little salon is hung with the loveliest of Gobelin tapestries, set in the most marvelous of carved frames. At the windows hang the richest of old-fashioned stuffs, magnificent brocade of changing color, gold and red, yellow and green, falling in numberless stately folds, adorned with regal fringes and tassels befitting the most splendid church canopies. The salon is furnished with a chest that her man of business found for her, worth to-day seven or eight thousand francs, with a table of carved ebony, a Venetian secretary with innumerable drawers, inlaid with ivory arabesques, and with the noblest examples of gothic furniture. There are pictures and statuettes, the choicest that one of her friends, a painter, could pick up among the dealers in curios, who had no idea, in 1818, of the value those treasures would acquire at a later date. Upon the tables are fine Japanese vases of curious design. The carpet is Persian, smuggled into France by way of the dunes.

Her bedroom is furnished in Louis Quinze style,

with flawless accuracy. There is the bedstead of carved wood painted white, with arched head and foot boards, surmounted by Loves tossing flowers, stuffed and covered with figured silk, the ceiling of the canopy embellished with four bunches of feathers; the hangings of genuine Persian stuff, caught back with silk loops, cords, and knots; the chimney ornaments in rockwork; an ormolu clock between two large vases of the first Sèvres blue, set in gilded copper; the mirror set in a frame of the same style; Pompadour dressing-table with its lace and its mirror; many articles of furniture of curious shape—the duchesses, the long, reclining chairs, the small, hard couches, the low easy-chairs with stuffed backs, the lacquered screens, the curtains of silk like that upon the furniture, lined with pink satin and draped with heavy cords; the carpet from La Savonnerie; in a word, all the rich, elegant, sumptuous, dainty objects, amid which the women of the eighteenth century made love.

The study, entirely modern, in contrast with the gewgaws of the time of Louis Quinze, has beautiful mahogany furniture; the bookshelves are well filled; it has a comfortable couch and resembles a boudoir. The charming trifles that betray a woman's presence lie around on all sides and fill the mind with modern things: journals, handkerchief and glove boxes, porcelain lamp shades, statuettes, vases, writing desks, an album or two, paperweights and all the countless fashionable trinkets. Sight-seers view with anxious surprise several

pistols, an Oriental pipe, a hunting crop, a hammock, a rifle, a blouse, tobacco, and a knapsack—a curious collection which depicts Félicité's character.

Every great mind, on visiting this spot, will be impressed by the peculiar beauties of the landscape, which extends, a treeless waste, beyond the park, the last vegetation upon terra firma. The melancholy sheets of brackish water, separated by narrow white ribbons of road, along which the *paludier* walks, dressed all in white, raking up the salt and piling it in *mulons*; this expanse which the saline exhalations prevent the birds from crossing, thus nullifying all the efforts of vegetation; these sands where the eye is relieved only by a little coarse, persistent weed with pink flowers, and by the Carthusian pink; this salt water lake, the sand dunes and the glimpse of Le Croisic, a miniature city planted, like Venice, in the midst of the sea; and the broad Ocean that spreads its fringe of foam along the granite cliffs, bring out in bolder relief their strange shapes—it is a spectacle that elevates the mind even while it depresses it, the effect always produced at last by the sublime, awakening regret for things unknown of which the mind catches a glimpse upon a hopeless height. Wherefore these savage harmonies are congenial to none but great minds and great sorrows. The rough, uneven waste, where at times the sun's rays, reflected by the water and the sands, whiten the village of Batz and gleam upon the roofs of Le Croisic with a pitiless glare, furnished Camille

with food for meditation for whole days. She turned but seldom toward the cool, refreshing prospect of the thickets and flowering hedges by which Guérande is enveloped, like a bride, with flowers, ribbons, veils and garlands. She was suffering then from a horrible, unfamiliar pain.

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As soon as Calyste saw the weathercocks upon the two gables appear above the thorn-broom along the highway and the distorted heads of the tall pines, the air seemed lighter; Guérande was like a prison to him, his life was at Les Touches.

Who cannot understand the attraction that existed there for a candid young man. Love like Cherubino's, which brought him to the feet of a young woman who became a goddess to him before he saw her as a woman, was destined to survive Félicité's inexplicable cruelty. That sentiment, which is the need of loving rather than love, had in all probability not escaped the searching analysis of Camille Maupin, and thence, perhaps, came her refusal—an instance of noble-hearted conduct which Calyste failed to understand. Moreover, there the marvels of modern civilization were the more impressive because of their contrast with all Guérande, where the poverty of the Du Guénics was regarded as splendor. There Parisian magnificence, as of a new world, was displayed to the enchanted gaze of this ignorant youth, who knew only the genista of Bretagne and the furze of La Vendée; and in like manner, he heard a resonant, unfamiliar language there. Calyste listened to the poetic accents of the loveliest music, the marvelous music of the nineteenth century, in which melody and harmony

contend on equal terms, in which vocalization and instrumentation have both attained incredible perfection. He saw there the most remarkable productions of the brush, those of the French school, the heir at the present day of the Italian, Spanish and Flemish schools, in which talent has become so common that all eyes and all hearts, weary of talent, are calling loudly for true genius. He read there works of the imagination, the amazing creations of modern literature, which produced their natural effect upon his untried heart. In short, our great nineteenth century was exhibited to him in all its varied magnificence, with its criticism, its efforts at renovation in every direction, its superhuman undertakings, almost all on a scale commensurate with that of the giant whose flags were the swaddling clothes of the century in its infancy, and who sang hymns to it, accompanied by the awful bass of the cannon.

Introduced by Félicité to all these forms of grandeur which escape the notice, perhaps, of those who give birth to them and are responsible for their appearance on the stage, Calyste gratified, at Les Touches, the taste for the marvelous which is so strong at his age, and that outspoken admiration, the first love of young manhood, which takes fire so quickly at criticism. It is so natural that flame should ascend! He listened to the pretty Parisian raillery, the refined satire which revealed to him the nature of French wit, and awakened a thousand ideas that lay sleeping in his mind in the soothing

torpor of his home life. In his eyes, Mademoiselle des Touches was the mother of his intelligence, a mother whom he could love without guilt. She was so good to him! A woman is always adorable to a man in whom she inspires love, although she does not seem to share it.

At this time Félicité was giving him music lessons. To him those great rooms on the ground floor, made to appear still greater by the skilful disposition of lawns and thickets in the park; the stairway, furnished with the chefs-d'œuvre of Italian patience, carved wood, Venetian and Florentine mosaics, bas-reliefs in ivory and marble, curios manufactured by order of the fairies of the Middle Ages; and the private salon, so coquettish, so voluptuously artistic, were vivified, illumined by a supernatural, strange, indefinable light and spirit and atmosphere. Modern society, with its poetic conceptions, presented a striking contrast to the stupid, patriarchal society of Guérande, when the two systems were brought face to face. On one side, the innumerable effects of art; on the other, the monotony of uncouth Bretagne. No one therefore will wonder why the poor child, intensely bored, as his mother was, by the intricacies of the *mouche*, always felt a thrill of excitement as he rang the bell, crossed the courtyard and entered the house.

It is to be noticed that such emotions do not assail grown men, accustomed to life and its drawbacks, whom nothing surprises and who are ready for anything.

As he opened the door, Calyste heard the sound of the piano and supposed that Camille was in the salon; but when he entered the billiard-room he no longer heard the music. Camille was playing, doubtless, on the small upright piano which Conti had brought to her from England and which stood in her private salon above. As he ascended the stairs, the thick carpet entirely deadening the sound of his footsteps, Calyste moved more and more slowly. He realized that there was something extraordinary about the music. Félicité was playing for herself alone, she was talking to herself, as it were. Instead of entering the room, the young man sat down upon a gothic bench upholstered in green velvet, which stood at one side of the landing, beneath a window artistically framed in carved woodwork, painted nut-green and varnished.

Nothing could be more weirdly melancholy than Camille's improvisation; you would have said it was a human soul singing a *De Profundis* to God from the depths of the tomb. The young lover recognized therein the prayer of despairing love, the mild lament of the resigned heart, the wailing of repressed suffering. Camille had elaborated, varied, modified the cavatina, *Grâce pour toi, grâce pour moi*, which makes up almost the whole of the fourth act of *Robert le Diable*.

Suddenly she began to sing in a heartrending tone, then as suddenly broke off. Calyste entered the room and discovered the cause of the interruption. Poor Camille Maupin, lovely Félicité, turned

to him, without a trace of coquetry, a face bathed in tears, took her handkerchief and wiped her eyes, and said simply:

"*Bonjour.*"

She was fascinating in her morning toilet. She had on her head, one of the red velvet nets then in vogue, and clusters of glossy black hair escaped through its meshes. A very short redingote formed a modern Greek tunic, which disclosed a pair of fine linen pantalettes with embroidered ruffles, and the prettiest red and gold Turkish slippers.

"What is it?" said Calyste.

"He hasn't come back," she replied, standing at the window and looking out over the sand, the arm of the sea and the marshes.

This reply explained her toilet. Camille was apparently waiting for Claude Vignon, and she was annoyed as a woman is who has put herself out for nothing. A man of thirty would have seen that. Calyste saw nothing but Camille's grief.

"You are anxious?" he asked.

"Yes," said she, in a melancholy tone which the youth could not analyze.

He walked quickly to the door.

"Well, where are you going?"

"To find him," he replied.

"Dear boy!" said she, taking his hand and keeping him beside her with one of those melting glances which are the most delicious of rewards to a youthful heart. "Are you mad? How do you expect to find him on this coast?"

"I will find him."

"Your mother would be terrified to death. Come, stay with me. I insist upon it," she said, leading him to a seat on the divan. "Don't throw away any sympathy on me. These tears that you see are the kind of tears that give us pleasure. We have a faculty that men have not, of abandoning ourselves to our nervous nature by carrying sentiment to extremes. By imagining certain situations and acting accordingly, we work ourselves up until we begin to weep and sometimes fall into a serious condition, become really ill. Our fancies are not vagaries of the mind, but of the heart. You came just in time, for solitude is not at all what I need. I was not deceived by his pretended desire to visit Le Croisic without me, and Batz and the cliffs and sand and salt marshes. I knew he would be gone several days instead of one. He wanted to leave us alone; he is jealous, or rather, he is playing at jealousy. You are young and handsome."

"Don't you tell me that! Must I not come any more?" asked Calyste, with difficulty restraining a tear that at last rolled down his cheek affecting Félicité keenly.

"You are an angel!" she cried.

Thereupon she gayly sang Mathilda's *Bleibe* from *Wilhelm Tell*, to divest of all trace of solemnity, that magnificent reply of the princess to her subject.

"His purpose was," she continued, "to make me believe that his love for me is greater than it is. He knows the extent of my good wishes for him,"

she said, watching Calyste closely; "but he is humiliated perhaps to find himself inferior to me in that respect. Perhaps, too, he has conceived some suspicion of you and wants to take us by surprise. But, even if he is guilty of nothing worse than going off to enjoy that wild walk without me, failing to make me his partner in his excursions and in the thoughts with which these sights inspire him, and causing me mortal anxiety—is not that enough? I am no more truly loved by this great intellect than I was by the musician, the wit, the soldier. Sterne is right: names have some significance and mine is the most cruel mockery. I shall die without finding in any man the love I have in my heart, the poetic imaginings I have in my mind."

She sat with her arms hanging by her sides, her head resting against the cushion, her eyes staring blankly at a flower in the carpet. The suffering of superior intellects has something grand and imposing, it reveals a vast expanse of mind to which the spectator's imagination imparts even greater proportions. Such minds partake of the privileges of royalty, which, through its hold upon the hearts of a people, makes itself felt throughout the world.

"Why did you—?" Calyste began, but he could not finish.

Camille Maupin's lovely, burning hand was laid upon his and its eloquent touch interrupted him.

"Nature changed its laws for my benefit by granting me five or six additional years of youth. I turned you away from selfishness. Sooner or later,

age would have separated us. I am thirteen years older than he, and that is bad enough."

"You will be lovely at sixty!" cried Calyste, heroically.

"May God grant it!" she replied with a smile. "However, dear boy, I choose to love him. Despite his insensibility, his lack of imagination, his cowardly indifference, and the envy that consumes him, I believe that there is some grandeur under the rags and I hope to galvanize his heart, to save him from himself, to attach him to me—Alas! my mind is clear-sighted but my heart is blind."

Her outspokenness concerning herself was terrifying. She suffered and analyzed her suffering, as Cuvier and Dupuytren explained to their friends the fatal advance of their disease and the progress death was making in them. Camille Maupin understood herself as thoroughly in the matter of passion as those two scientists did in the matter of anatomy.

"I brought him here in order to be able to form a just estimate of his character, and he is bored already. He misses Paris, and I have told him so; he has the critic's homesickness, having neither author to pluck, nor theory to pull to pieces, nor poet to drive to desperation, and he dares not indulge here in a debauch which would enable him to lay aside for a time the burden of his thoughts. Alas! my love is not true enough, perhaps, to relax the tension of his brain. In short, I do not intoxicate him! Get tipsy with him to-night; I will say I am

ill and stay in my room, and then I shall find out whether I am mistaken."

Calyste became as red as a cherry, red from his chin to the roots of his hair and his ears were edged with fire.

"Mon Dieu!" she cried, "here am I thoughtlessly corrupting your maidenly innocence! Forgive me, Calyste. When you fall in love, you will understand that one is capable of setting the Seine on fire to afford the slightest pleasure to the beloved object, as the fortune-tellers say."

She paused a moment.

"There are proud, consistent people who exclaim at a certain age: 'If I were to begin life anew, I would do as I have done!' But I,—who do not consider myself weak,—I exclaim: 'I would be a woman like your mother, Calyste.' To have a Calyste—what bliss! If I had taken for my husband the most clownish of men, I would have been a humble, submissive wife. And yet, I have been guilty of no offence against society, I have wronged no one but myself. Alas! dear boy, woman can no more go alone in society than in what is called her primitive state. The affections which are not in harmony with social and natural laws, the affections which are not forced in a word, avoid us. It is as well to be of some use in the world as to suffer for the sake of suffering. What do I care for the children of my Faucombe cousins, who are not Faucombes, whom I have not seen for twenty years, and who, in addition, have married merchants?

You are a son who never cost me the cares of maternity, I will leave my fortune to you, and you will be happy, in that respect at least, through my means, my precious treasure of grace and beauty which nothing can change or wither."

After these words, spoken in a deep voice, she lowered her beautiful eyelids in order that he might read nothing in her eyes.

"You have refused to take anything from me," said Calyste, "and I would return your fortune to your heirs."

"Child!" said Camille in the same deep voice, while the tears rolled down her cheeks. "In heaven's name, will nothing save me from myself?"

"You have a story to tell me and a letter to—" said the noble-hearted youth, to turn her mind from her sorrow.

But he did not finish; she cut him short.

"You are right, one must keep one's word before everything. It was too late yesterday, but it seems that we shall have plenty of time to ourselves today," she said in a tone that was at once pleasant and bitter. "Before I begin to fulfil my promise, I am going to move my chair so that I can keep my eye on the road leading to the cliffs."

Calyste moved a great gothic easy-chair in the direction indicated and opened the window. Camille Maupin, who shared the Oriental taste of the illustrious writer of her sex, took a magnificent Persian nargileh that an ambassador had given her; she filled the bowl with patchouli, cleaned the tube,

perfumed the quill mouthpiece, which she made herself and used only once, lighted the yellow leaves, placed the long-necked blue and gold enamel bowl of the lovely instrument of pleasure a few steps away, and rang for tea.

"Will you have a cigarette? Oh! I am constantly forgetting that you never smoke. Such purity as yours is so rare! It seems that no hand save that of an Eve fresh from the hands of God is fit to caress the satin-like down upon your cheeks."

Calyste blushed and took his place upon a stool; he did not see the profound emotion that made Camille blush.

"The person from whom I received this letter yesterday, and who will, perhaps, be here to-morrow," said Félicité, "is the Marquise de Rochefide. Old Rochefide, whose family is not so old as yours, after he had married his oldest daughter to a great Portuguese nobleman who is permanently established in France, was determined to arrange an alliance for his son with the old nobility, in order to put him in a way to obtain the peerage that the father had been unable to obtain for himself. The Comtesse de Montcornet told him of a young woman in the Department of Orne, a Mademoiselle Béatrix-Maximilienne-Rose de Casteran, younger daughter of the Marquis de Casteran, who wanted to marry his two daughters without dowries, in order to reserve his whole fortune for the Comte de Casteran, his son. The Casterans trace their descent back to Adam, so it seems. Béatrix, who was born and

brought up at the Château de Casteran, was at this time—the marriage took place in 1828—about twenty years old. She was remarkable for what you provincials call originality, which is nothing more than a certain superiority in the matter of ideas, exaltation, appreciation of the beautiful, and enthusiasm for works of art. Take the word of a poor woman who has allowed herself to follow that delusive path, there is nothing more dangerous for a woman to do; by following it you arrive where you find the marchioness and myself at this moment—at the bottom of the pit. Men alone have the staves with which to assist their steps along those precipices, a force which we lack and which makes monsters of us when we possess it. Her old grandmother, the dowager Marquise de Casteran, was delighted to see her marry a man whose superior she was certain to be in birth and in ideas. The Rochefides did things very handsomely, and Béatrix had no reason to speak otherwise than kindly of them; in like manner, the Rochefides had every reason to be content with the Casterans, who, being allied to the Verneuils, the D'Esgrignons, the Troisvilles, obtained the peerage for their son-in-law in the last great batch of peers created by Charles X.—peers whose patents were rescinded by the Revolution of July. Rochefide is a good deal of a fool; nevertheless, he began by having a son; and, as he wearied his wife beyond endurance, she soon had enough of him. The first days of married life are a dangerous reef for petty minds as well as

for grand passions. In his capacity of fool, Rochefide mistook his wife's ignorance for coldness, he classed Béatrix among lymphatic, insensible women; she is a blonde, and, starting from that fact, he considered himself entirely safe to live as a bachelor, relying upon the marchioness's supposed coldness, her virtue, her pride and upon a pompous manner of life which builds a thousand barriers about a woman at Paris. You will see what I mean when you visit that city. Those people who counted upon taking advantage of his heedless tranquillity, said to him: 'You are very fortunate; you have a cold-blooded wife who will have only passions of the head; she is content to shine intellectually, her caprices are purely artistic; her jealousy, her desires will be satisfied if she can form a salon where she can assemble all the bright minds of the day; she will have musical debauches, orgies of literature.' And the husband swallowed this pleasantry, by which clowns are mystified in Paris. And yet Rochefide is no ordinary clown: he has as much vanity and pride as a man of intellect, with this difference, that men of intellect rub themselves with modesty and make cats of themselves; they caress you in order to be caressed; while Rochefide has a great, big, red, blooming self-esteem that admires itself in public and is forever smiling. His vanity airs itself in the stables and feeds noisily as it draws its fodder from the rack. He has those failings which are known only to those who are so situated as to pass judgment upon them in private, which impress

one only in the shadow and mystery of private life, while, in society, and to society, a man may seem delightful; Rochefide was certain to be quite insupportable as soon as he should believe that the sanctity of his fireside was threatened, for, he has that squint-eyed, despicable jealousy, that is brutal when it is detected, skulks like a coward for six months and becomes murderous the seventh. He thought to deceive his wife and he would fear her —two causes of tyranny—on the day he should perceive that the marchioness was charitable enough to pretend to be indifferent to his infidelity. I give you this analysis of his character, in order to explain Béatrix's conduct. The marchioness conceived the warmest admiration for me, but from admiration to jealousy is only a step. I have one of the most noteworthy salons in Paris, she desired to form one of her own and tried to take my people away from me. I don't care to keep those who want to leave me. She collected a lot of superficial people who are friendly to everybody from sheer indolence, and whose one aim is to leave a salon as soon as they enter it; but she hadn't time to found a society. In those days, I thought she was simply consumed with a thirst for celebrity of some sort. Nevertheless, she has grandeur of mind, a truly royal pride, ideas of her own, and a marvelous faculty for imagining and understanding everything; she will talk of metaphysics and music, theology and painting. You will see in her, as a woman, what we saw when she was a young bride; but there is a touch

of affectation in her; she makes too much show of knowing difficult things, Chinese or Hebrew, of having a shrewd idea of hieroglyphics or of being able to explain the papyrus in which the mummies are wrapped. Béatrix is one of those blondes beside whom the blonde Eve would look like a negress. She is as slender and straight as a wax taper and as white as the sacramental wafer; her face is long and pointed, her complexion somewhat variable, to-day of the color of fine lawn, to-morrow brown and spotted at a thousand points under the skin, as if the blood had deposited grains of dust there during the night; her forehead is magnificent, but a little too bold; her pupils are pale sea-green and float in the whites of her eyes behind scanty lashes and beneath slothful lids. She often has rings around her eyes. Her nose, which describes a quadrant of a circle, is very thin between the nostrils, indicating much subtlety, but rather impertinent. She has the Austrian mouth; the upper lip is more prominent than the lower, which falls in a disdainful fashion. Her pale cheeks do not flush except under the spur of intense emotion. Her chin is quite fat; mine is none too thin, and perhaps I may do wrong to tell you that women with fat chins are exacting in love. She has one of the loveliest figures I have ever seen, a back of dazzling whiteness, formerly very flat, but developed now, and filled out, so they say; but the waist has not been so fortunate as the shoulders, and the arms have remained thin. She has a free and easy carriage and manners, however, that atone

for whatever defects she may have and serve admirably to bring out her attractions. Nature has given her that regal air that cannot be acquired; it becomes her well and suddenly reveals the woman of noble birth, harmonizing, as it does, with the slender but deliciously graceful hips, with the prettiest foot in the world, and with the luxuriant angel's hair which Girodet's brush has so often represented, and which resembles floods of light. Although she is not flawlessly lovely or pretty, she produces an ineradicable impression when she chooses. She has only to array herself in cherry velvet with lace flounces and wear red roses in her hair, and she is divine. If, on any pretext, she could wear the costume of the days when women wore pointed bodices with stomachers of ribbons rising slender and tapering from the puffed-out amplitude of brocade petticoats with stiff, broad folds, when they were surrounded with plaited ruffles, hid their arms in slashed sleeves with lace wristbands from which the hand protruded like the pistil from its calyx, and when they confined their countless stray curls about a headdress studded with jewels,—Béatrix would contend on even terms with the ideal beauties you see dressed like this."

Félicité showed Calyste a lovely copy of Mieris's picture of a woman in white satin, standing, holding a piece of music and singing with a Barbantine gentleman, while a negro is pouring Spanish wine into a wineglass, and an old maidservant is arranging biscuits on a table.

"Blondes," she continued, "have the great advantage of diversity over us brunettes; there are a hundred different types of blondes, and there is only one type of brunettes. Blondes are more the woman than we; we French brunettes are too much like men. But don't go and fall in love with Béatrix from the portrait I have drawn of her, like some prince or other of the *Thousand and One Days.* You would arrive too late again, my poor boy. But let me console you. In this case, it's the first comer who gets the bones!"

These words were said with a purpose. The admiration depicted upon the young man's face was aroused by the painting rather than by the painter, whose *manner* missed its aim.

"Although she is a blonde," she continued. "Béatrix has not the delicate beauty adapted to her complexion; the lines of her face are severe, she is elegant and harsh; her face is like a rough sketch and you would say that she has the ardor of a Southron in her heart. She is an angel who flashes and shrivels up. Her eyes are thirsty. She appears to the best advantage when you look her squarely in the face; sidewise, her face looks as if it had been caught between two doors. You will see if I am mistaken. This is what brought about our intimacy. For three years, from 1828 to 1831, Béatrix, while making the most of the last fêtes of the Restoration, going from salon to salon, frequenting the court and adorning the costume balls at the Elysée-Bourbon, formed judgments of men and

things and events and life in general, from her own exalted point of view. Her mind was fully occupied. The first moment of giddiness caused by her entrance into society prevented her heart from awaking, and it was still benumbed by the first annoyances of marriage; the child, the lying-in, and all the bother of maternity, which I do not like. I am not a woman in that respect. I cannot endure children; they cause one constant annoyance and anxiety. For that reason, I think that one of the great blessings of modern society, of which we were deprived by that hypocrite of a Jean-Jacques, was that of leaving us free to be mothers or not as we chose. I may not be the only one who thinks so, but I am the only one who says it. From 1830 to 1831, during the storm, Béatrix was in the country on her husband's estate, as bored as any saint in his stall in paradise. On her return to Paris, the marchioness concluded, justly perhaps, that the revolution, although in the eyes of many people a purely political one, was destined to be a moral revolution. The social circle to which she belonged had been unable to reconstruct itself during the unexpected overthrow of the fifteen years of the Restoration, and was crumbling to pieces beneath the blows of the battering ram handled by the bourgeoisie. She had heard Monsieur Lainé's famous remark: 'Kings are making their exit!' That idea was not without influence upon her conduct, I think. She took an intelligent part in spreading the new doctrines, which bred like flies in the sun during the three

years after July, and wrought havoc in several female brains; but, like all the nobles, when she took up with these glorious novelties she was desirous of saving the nobility. When she saw that there was no longer any place for individual superiority, when she saw the great nobility beginning anew the silent opposition they had offered to Napoléon—which was the only rôle for them to play, under the Empire of action and deeds, but which in a moral epoch was equivalent to resigning their privileges—she preferred happiness to that policy of silence. When we were able to breathe freely, the marchioness met at my house the man with whom I expected to end my days,—Gennaro Conti, the great composer, of Neapolitan extraction but born at Marseilles. Conti is a very bright man and a talented composer, although he can never reach the highest rank. If there were no Meyerbeer or Rossini, he might perhaps pass for a man of genius. He has one advantage over them: in vocal music, he is what Paganini is on the violin, Liszt on the piano, Taglioni in dancing—in a word, he is what Garat was, and he recalls that famous singer to those who heard him. It is not a voice, my friend, but a soul. When his singing answers certain thoughts and feelings difficult to describe, which a woman sometimes has, she is lost when she listens to Gennaro. The marchioness conceived the wildest passion for him and took him away from me. It was an excessively provincial performance, but fair fighting. She won my esteem and my

friendship by the way she behaved toward me. She looked upon me as a woman who would defend my property, for she did not know that, in my eyes, the most absurd thing in the world under such circumstances is the object of the contest. She came to me. The proud creature was so deeply in love that she betrayed her secret to me and made me the arbiter of her destiny. She was adorable: she was still a woman and a marchioness in my eyes. I will tell you, my friend, that women may be bad sometimes, but they have hidden elements of grandeur which men will never learn to appreciate. And so, as I can take my oath to it as a woman, standing on the brink of the old age that awaits me, I will tell you that I was faithful to Conti, that I would have been faithful to him until death, and yet I knew him. His is a nature charming on the exterior, but detestable at bottom. He is a charlatan in things pertaining to the heart. There are men, like Nathan, whom I have mentioned to you, who are charlatans on the outside and in perfect good faith. Such men lie to themselves. They walk about on their stilts, thinking they are on their feet, and do their juggling with a sort of innocence; their vanity is in their blood; they are born comedians and braggarts and are made up as extravagantly as a Chinese vase; they will laugh at themselves perhaps. Their disposition is generous, however, and, like Murat's gorgeous royal costume, it attracts danger.

But Conti's knavery will never be known to

anyone but his mistress. He has, in the matter of his art, the famed Italian jealousy that led Carlone to murder Piola, and procured Paësiello a blow from a dagger. This terrible passion is hidden behind the most amiable good-fellowship. Conti hasn't the courage of his vice; he smiles at Meyerbeer and compliments him when he would like to tear him limb from limb. He feels his weakness and affects an appearance of strength; and then his vanity leads him to feign the sentiments that are farthest from his heart. He claims to be an artist who receives inspiration from Heaven. In his eyes, art is something holy and sacred. He is a fanatic, he is sublime in the mocking tone he adopts with men of the world; his eloquence seems to proceed from profound conviction. He is a seer, a demon, a god, an angel. Indeed Calyste, although warned against him, you will be his dupe. This Southerner, this fervid artist, is as cold as a well-chain. Listen to him; the artist is a missionary, art is a religion which has its priests and should have its martyrs. When he is once started on this theme, Gennaro attains the most convulsive pathos that a professor of German philosophy ever vented upon his auditory. You admire his convictions, but he believes in nothing. As he wafts you up to Heaven with a song that seems like a mysterious, love-diffusing vapor, he bestows an ecstatic glance upon you; but he has an eye upon your admiration and is wondering: 'Am I really a god in their eyes?' At the same moment he may be saying to himself: 'I have

eaten too much macaroni.' You believe that he loves you, but he hates you, and you know not why; but I knew: he had seen another woman the day before and had taken it into his head to fall in love with her, and he insulted me with pretended love, with hypocritical caresses, making me pay dearly for his forced fidelity. In a word, he has an insatiable thirst for applause, he sportively apes and ridicules everybody; he feigns joy as well as sorrow, but he succeeds, withal, to admiration. He makes himself agreeable, we fall in love with him; he can win admiration when he chooses. When I left him, I abhorred his voice, but he owes more of his success to it than to his talent as a composer; and yet he prefers to be a man of genius like Rossini rather than a performer of Rubini's force. I had made the mistake of attaching myself to him, I was resigned to the fate of hanging garlands on the idol to the end. Conti, like many artists, is a dainty creature; he loves his ease, his little pleasures; he is coquettish, dandified, well-dressed; oh! well, I flattered all his passions, I loved that weak, cunning nature. I was envied and I sometimes smiled in pity. I judged his courage fairly; he is physically brave, and physical bravery, they say, is the only virtue in which there is no hypocrisy. I saw him put to the test on one occasion, while we were traveling together: he did not hesitate to risk his life, dearly as he loves it; but, strangely enough, in Paris, I have known him to commit what I call poltroonery of thought. My

friend, I knew all these things. I said to the poor marchioness:

"'You don't know what a trap you are putting your foot into. You are the Perseus of a poor miserable Andromeda, you will set me free from my rock. If he love you, so much the better! but I doubt it, for he loves no one but himself.'

"Gennaro was in the seventh heaven of pride. I was not a marchioness, I was not born a Casteran, I was forgotten in a day. I took a fierce delight in going to the bottom of that nature. Having no doubt as to the certain end, I determined to watch Conti's twisting and turning. My poor boy, in a week, I was treated to perfect horrors in the way of sentiment, the most infamous buffoonery. I will not go into details, for you will see the man here. But, as he knows that I know him, he hates me to-day. If he could poniard me with any hope of impunity, I should not live two seconds. I have never said a word to Béatrix. Gennaro's last and never-failing insult is to believe that I am capable of imparting my melancholy knowledge to the marchioness. He is anxious and thoughtful every moment; for he does not believe that anyone on earth is possessed of decent feelings. He is still playing with me the part of a man unhappy at having left me. You will find in him the most touching cordiality of manner; he is caressing and chivalrous. To him, every woman is a Madonna. One must live a long time with him to learn the secret of this false benevolence and avoid the invisible dagger in his

mystifications. His air of sincerity would deceive God himself. So you will be taken in by his cat-like ways and you will never believe in the profound and rapid arithmetic of his private thoughts. But enough of him. I carried my indifference so far as to receive them at my house. The result was that the most keen-sighted society on earth, Parisian society, had no idea of the intrigue. Although Gennaro was drunken with pride, he doubtless felt the necessity of posing before Béatrix; his dissimulation was admirable. He surprised me, for I expected to find him demanding publicity. The marchioness finally compromised herself after a year of happiness exposed to all the vicissitudes and hazards of Parisian life. She had not seen Gennaro for several days, and I had invited him to dine with me; she was to come in the evening. Rochefide suspected nothing; but Béatrix knew her husband so well, that, as she often told me, she would have preferred the most abject poverty to life with that man in case he should acquire the right to despise her or torment her. I had selected the day of the soirée of our friend the Comtesse de Montcornet. After she had seen that her husband's coffee was served, Béatrix left the salon to go and dress, although she never began her toilet so early.

"'Your hairdresser hasn't come," observed Rochefide, when he learned the reason of his wife's departure.

"'Thérèse will dress my hair,' she replied.

"'But where are you going, pray? You don't go to Madame de Montcornet's at eight o'clock.'

"'No,' said she; 'but I am going to hear the first act at the *Italiens.*'

The inquisitive bailiff in Voltaire's *Huron* is a mute in comparison with lazy husbands. Béatrix fled in order to avoid further questioning, and did not hear her husband's reply:

"'Very well, we will go together.'

"He had no malicious purpose; he had no reason to suspect his wife, she had so much liberty! He exerted himself not to interfere with her in any way, as a matter of self-esteem. Moreover, Béatrix's conduct did not offer the least pretext for the most austere critic. The marquis was expecting to go somewhere or other, to his mistress's perhaps! He had dressed before dinner, he had only to take his hat and gloves, when he heard his wife's carriage rumbling under the awning at the front door. He went to her room and found her all ready, but amazed beyond expression to see him.

"'Where are you going?' she inquired.

"'Didn't I say I would go with you to the *Italiens?*'

"The marchioness repressed any external indication of her intense annoyance; but her cheeks became as brilliant a red as if she had rouged them.

"'Well, let us go,' said she.

"Rochefide followed her, taking no heed of the emotion betrayed by her voice,—for she was consumed by the most bitter wrath.

"'To the *Italiens!*' said he.

"'No!' cried Béatrix, 'to Mademoiselle des Touches. I have a few words I want to say to her,' she explained, when the door was closed.

"The carriage drove away.

'"If you choose,' said Béatrix, 'I will take you to the *Italiens* first and then go on to her house.'

"'No,' the marquis replied, 'if you have only a few words to say to her, I will wait in the carriage; it is half-past seven.'

"If Béatrix had said to her husband: 'Go to the *Italiens* and leave me in peace,' he would have obeyed without a word. Like every bright woman, she was afraid of arousing his suspicions because she was conscious of her own guilt, so she submitted. When she left the *Italiens* to come to me, her husband accompanied her. She entered my salon, crimson with anger and impatience. She walked up to me and whispered in my ear as calmly as you please:

"'My dear Félicité, I shall start for Italy with Conti to-morrow evening; ask him to make all the arrangements and to come here with a carriage and passports.'

"Then she went away with her husband. Violent passions will have their liberty at any price. Béatrix had been suffering for a year from the restraint and from the infrequency of their meetings; she looked upon herself as united to Gennaro. So I was not surprised at anything. In her place, with my disposition, I would have done the same.

She determined upon this pronounced step because her plans were interfered with in the most innocent way. She warded off one catastrophe by a greater one. Conti's joy distressed me, for his vanity alone was concerned in it.

"'That is what I call love!' he said in the midst of his exultation. 'How few women would destroy their lives, their fortunes, their reputations in this way!

"'Yes, she loves you,' I said, 'but you don't love her!'

"He flew into a rage and made a scene: he declaimed and stormed at me, descanted upon his love, saying that he had never believed it was possible for him to love so deeply. I was unmoved and loaned him such money as he needed for the journey, for he was quite penniless at the time. Béatrix left a letter for Rochefide, and started for Italy the next evening. She stayed there two years; she wrote me several times and her letters are delightful outpourings of affection; the poor child clings to me as the only woman who understands her. She adores me, she says. The need of money compelled Gennaro to write an opera, for he did not find in Italy the means of livelihood open to composers at Paris. Here is Béatrix's letter; you can understand it now, if one can analyze the feelings of the heart at your age," she said, handing him the letter.

At that moment, Claude Vignon entered the room. That unexpected apparition made both Calyste and

Félicité silent for a moment,—she from surprise, he from vague uneasiness.

The high, broad forehead of this young man, bald at thirty-seven, seemed overcast by clouds. His firm, sensible mouth wore an expression of cold irony. Claude Vignon is an imposing personage, notwithstanding the premature decay of a face that was once magnificent but is now livid. Between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, he almost resembled the divine Raphael; but his nose, the feature of the human face that changes most, is sharpened to a point; his face has settled, so to speak, under the influence of some mysterious depression, its outlines have acquired a fulness of an unpleasant color, the leaden tones predominate in the worn-out complexion, but nobody knows the causes of his fatigue;—perhaps he has grown old prematurely as the result of bitter loneliness, of abuse of his understanding. He searches others' thoughts, without purpose or system, the pickaxe of his criticism always demolishes, never builds up. So his weariness is that weariness of the mechanic, not of the architect. His eyes, of a pale blue, once bright and sparkling, have been veiled by unknown suffering or dimmed by sadness and depression. Dissipation has stamped a dark band above the eyebrows. The temples have lost their freshness. The chin, which once gave an incomparable air of distinction to his face, has grown double in the most plebeian way. His voice, never of great depth, has grown weaker; it is neither hoarse nor extinct, but

is somewhere between hoarseness and extinction. The impassibility of the fine head, and the fixed stare, cover an irresolution, a weakness that is betrayed by a light, mocking smile. This weakness affects his acts, not his thoughts; there are traces of encyclopædic understanding upon his brow and in the play of his features,—childish features and haughty at the same time.

There is one detail that may explain the oddities of his character. The man is tall and already slightly bent, like all those who carry a world of ideas. Such long bodies have never been remarkable for continuous energy, for creative activity. Charlemagne, Belisarius, Narses and Constantine are noteworthy exceptions in that respect. Certainly, Claude Vignon suggests mysteries to be divined. In the first place, he is very simple and very shrewd at once. Although he falls into excesses with the facility of a courtesan, his mind remains untouched. That intellect, which is capable of criticizing the arts and sciences, literature, politics, is incapable of managing his external life. Claude contemplates himself in the light of the extent of his intellectual kingdom, and abandons its form with the indifference of Diogenes. Content to see through and to understand everything, he despises mere materialities; but, being assailed by doubt as soon as he begins to think of creating, he sees the obstacles without being seduced by the attractions, and wastes so much time discussing methods that he remains with his hands hanging at his sides and

nothing comes of it. He is the Grand Turk of the intellect, lulled to sleep by meditation. Criticism is his opium and his harem of books written has caused him to turn with disgust from the thought of writing one. Indifferent to the smallest as to the greatest things, he is compelled, by the very weight of his head, to fall into debauchery, to abdicate for some moments his fatal power of omnipotent analysis. He is too much engrossed with the wrong side of genius, and you can understand now that Camille Maupin might try to set him right.

It was a seductive task. Claude Vignon deems himself no less great as a politician than as a writer; but that unpublished Machiavel laughs in his sleeve at ambitious men, he knows all that he can do, he instinctively gauges his future by his faculties, he imagines himself a great man, he eyes the obstacles, sees through the folly of upstarts, takes alarm or is disgusted, and lets the time pass without setting to work. Like Etienne Lousteau the writer of *feuilletons*, like Nathan the famous dramatic author, like Blondet, a journalist like himself, he came from the bosom of the bourgeoisie, to which we owe the majority of great writers.

"How did you come?" said Mademoiselle des Touches, blushing with happiness or surprise.

"Through the door," said Claude Vignon, dryly.

"Indeed!" she cried with a shrug, "I am well aware that you are not the man to come in through a window."

"Escalade is a species of cross of honor in the eyes of the women one loves."

"Enough," said Félicité.

"Do I disturb you?" Vignon inquired.

"Monsieur," said the artless Calyste, "this letter—"

"Keep it, I ask no questions; *at our age such things are understood,*" he said mockingly, interrupting Calyste.

"But, monsieur—" the chevalier began, indignantly.

"Be calm, young man; I am excessively indulgent to real sentiment—"

"My dear Calyste—" Camille began.

"Dear?" interposed Vignon.

"Claude is joking," said Camille, still addressing Calyste; "he does wrong to joke with you who know nothing of Parisian methods of mystification."

"I did not know I was joking," rejoined Vignon, gravely.

"Which way did you come? For two hours I have never ceased to look in the direction of Le Croisic."

"You did not look all the time," replied Vignon.

"You are unbearable with your jesting."

"I, jest?"

Calyste rose.

"You are not so badly off here that you need go," said Vignon.

"On the contrary," said the youth, boiling over with indignation, as Camille gave him her hand,

which he kissed instead of pressing it, leaving a burning tear upon it.

"I would like to be that boy," said the critic, seating himself and taking the end of the hookah. "How he will love!"

"Too much, for he will not be loved," said Mademoiselle des Touches. "Madame de Rochefide is coming here."

"Aha!" Claude exclaimed. "With Conti?"

"He is coming with her, but she will remain after he has left."

"Has there been any trouble?"

"No."

"Play me one of Beethoven's sonatas; I know nothing of the music he has written for the piano."

Claude set about filling the bowl of the hookah with Turkish tobacco, scrutinizing Camille much more closely than she had any idea of; a horrible thought filled his mind—he believed that a loyal woman had undertaken to make a dupe of him. It was a novel situation.

*

Calyste, as he took his leave, was not thinking of Béatrix de Rochefide or her letter; he was furiously angry with Claude Vignon, he raged inwardly over what he took for indelicacy, he pitied poor Félicité. How could a man be loved by that sublime creature and not worship her on his knees, not believe her on the faith of a glance or a smile? After he had been privileged to witness the agony of suspense Camille suffered and had seen her face turned always toward Le Croisic, he had longed to tear that pale, cold spectre to pieces, having no conception, as Félicité had told him, of the mystifications of thought in which the mocking spirits of the press excel. To him, love was a human religion.

When his mother saw him in the courtyard, she could not restrain a joyful cry, and old Mademoiselle de Guénic at once whistled for Mariotte.

"Mariotte, here's the child, put on the fish."

"I saw him, mademoiselle," was the cook's reply.

The mother, somewhat disturbed by the melancholy that sat enthroned upon Calyste's brow, having no suspicion that it was caused by Vignon's pretended unkind treatment of Félicité, sat down at her embroidery. The old aunt took her knitting. The baron gave his son his easy-chair and walked up and down the hall as if to limber up his legs before going to take a turn in the garden. Never did

the brush of Dutch or Flemish painter represent so dark an interior, peopled with figures so harmoniously blended. The comely youth in black velvet, the mother still so lovely, and the two old people, with that old-fashioned apartment as a frame, expressed the most touching domestic harmony.

Fanny would have liked to question Calyste; but he had taken from his pocket the letter from Béatrix, who was perhaps destined to wreck the happiness of that noble family. As he unfolded it, Calyste's vivid imagination showed him the marchioness dressed as Camille Maupin had fancifully described her.

LETTER FROM BÉATRIX TO FÉLICITÉ.

"Genoa, July 2.

"I have not written you since our stay at Florence, my dear; but Venice and Rome absorbed my time, and, you know, pleasure fills a great place in life. Neither of us has reached a point where our happiness depends upon one letter more or less. I am a little tired. I wanted to see everything and when one's mind is not easily satiated, the constant repetition of one's pleasures causes weariness. Our friend has had notable triumphs at La Scala and La Fenice, and these last days at Saint-Charles. Three Italian operas in two years! you won't say that love makes him lazy. We have had a marvelous reception everywhere, but I should have preferred silence and solitude. Is not that the only

manner of life suitable to women who are directly at odds with society? I thought it would be so. Love, my dear, is a more exacting master than marriage; but it is so sweet to obey him! After playing at love all my life, I did not know that it would be necessary to see society again, even by snatches, and the attentions lavished upon me were so many wounds. I was no longer on a footing of equality with the most intellectual women. The greater the consideration shown me, the more evident my inferiority became. Gennaro did not understand these refinements, but he was so happy that it would have been very ungracious in me not to sacrifice my petty vanity to such a magnificent thing as the life of an artist. We women exist only by love, while men live by love and by action; otherwise they would not be men. But we married women suffer a great disadvantage in such positions as I now occupy, whereas you escaped it; you remained great in the eyes of the world, which had no rights over you; you had your independence, and I have surrendered mine. I speak of this only in connection with those things that concern the heart, and without regard to social matters, which I have thrown overboard altogether. You could be a flirt and headstrong, and could retain all the attractions of the woman who loves and can grant or refuse everything at her pleasure; you had retained the privilege of being capricious, even in the interest of your love and of the man who caught your fancy. Lastly, you have your own approbation to-day; I

no longer have that liberty of the heart which I find it delightful to exercise in love, even when the passion is everlasting. I have not the right to quarrel with a laughing face, which we prize so highly and with so good reason; is it not the probe with which we question the heart? I can make no threats, I must derive all my attractions from unlimited obedience and meekness, I must make an impression by the grandeur of my love; I would rather die than leave Gennaro, for my hope of pardon is in the sanctity of my passion. Between the dignity of society and my poor little dignity, which is a secret to my conscience, I did not hesitate. If I have now and then fits of melancholy like the clouds that pass over the clearest sky, of the sort to which we women love to abandon ourselves, I say nothing about them, they resemble regrets. *Mon Dieu!* I am so thoroughly conscious of the extent of my obligations, that I have armed myself with entire indulgence; but, up to the present time, Gennaro has never alarmed my sensitive jealousy. Indeed I do not know in what respect my dear, beautiful genius can be found lacking. My angel, I am a little like the devotees that argue with their God, for do I not owe my happiness to you? And that being so, can you doubt that I often think of you? I have seen Italy, at all events! seen it as you saw it, as everyone should see it, illumined in our hearts by love, as it is by its beautiful sunlight and its chefs-d'œuvre. I pity those who are profoundly moved by the adoration it demands at

every step, if they have not a hand to press, a heart in which to pour the overflow of the emotions which grow calm there even while they increase in intensity. These two years are, so far as I am concerned, my whole life, and my memory will reap rich harvests there. Did you never, as I have done, plan to live at Chiavari, to buy a palace at Venice, a country house at Sorrento, a villa at Florence? Do not all loving women dread society? And should not I, who am cast out of it forever, long to bury myself in some lovely countryside, among heaps of flowers, on the shore of a pretty lake or in a valley as pretty as any lake, like the one we see from Fiesole? But alas! we are poor artists, and the need of money brings the two wanderers back to Paris. Gennaro doesn't want me to notice any change in our mode of life, so he is coming to Paris to attend the rehearsals of a new work, a grand opera. You understand, as well as I do myself, my lovely angel, that I cannot set foot in Paris. At the price of my love, I would not meet one of the glances from man or woman that would make me think of murder. Yes, I would cut in pieces anyone who honored me with his pity or undertook to shield me with his favor—like that adorable Châteauneuf, who, under Henri III. I think, drove spurs into his horse and rode down the Provost of Paris for a crime of that sort. I write you therefore to say that I shall soon join you at Les Touches, and await our Gennaro in that charming retreat. You see how forward I am with my benefactress and

sister! But the greatness of my obligations will not lead me, as it does some people, to ingratitude. You have said so much to me about the difficulties of the journey that I shall try to reach Le Croisic by water. That idea occurred to me when I learned here that there was a small Danish vessel already laden with marble, which is going there to get salt on its return to the Baltic. In this way, I avoid the expense and fatigue of the journey by post. I know that you are not alone and I am very glad of it; I had some remorse in the midst of my felicity. You are the only person with whom I could endure to be alone without Conti. Will it not also be a pleasure to you to have with you a woman who will understand your happiness without being jealous of it? Well, we shall meet soon. The wind is favorable and I am off, sending you a kiss."

"Ah! well, she loves too," said Calyste, refolding the letter with a melancholy air.

His sadness shed a bright light upon his mother's heart, as a flash of lightning might light up a dark abyss. The baron had gone out. Fanny bolted the door in the turret, and resumed her position at the back of the chair in which her son was sitting, like Dido's sister in Guérin's picture; she kissed him on the forehead, as she said:

"What is it, dear Calyste? what makes you sad? You promised to explain your assiduous visits to Les Touches; I would bless its mistress, you said, did you not?"

"Yes, most certainly," said he; "she has proved to me, my darling mother, the insufficiency of my education, at a time when the nobles ought to win some personal renown to restore life to their names. I was as far from the age I live in as Guérande is from Paris. She has been, in a certain sense, the mother of my intellect."

"I shall not bless her for that," said the baroness, her eyes filling with tears.

"Mamma," cried Calyste, as the hot tears fell upon his brow, pearls of sorrowing maternity! "don't weep, mamma, for I offered a little while ago, in order to do her a service, to scour the country from the custom-house outlook to the village of Batz, and she said: 'How anxious your mother would be!'"

"She said that? Then I can forgive her much," said Fanny.

"Félicité seeks nothing but my good," continued Calyste: "she often keeps back lively, questionable words that sometimes slip from an artist, in order not to shake my faith, for she doesn't know that it cannot be shaken. She has described to me the lives led at Paris by some young men of the oldest nobility, who have gone there from their province, as I may go, leaving a family without fortune, and winning a great fortune there, by the power of their will and their intellect. I can do what the Baron de Rastignac did, who is in the ministry to-day. She gives me lessons on the piano, she teaches me Italian, she has initiated me

into a thousand social secrets that no one in Guérande suspects. She could not give me the treasures of love, so she gives me those of her vast intellect, her wit, her genius. She does not seek to be a pleasure, but a source of information to me; she offends none of my religious ideas; she has faith in the nobility, she loves Bretagne, she—"

"She has changed our Calyste," interposed the old blind woman, "for I can't understand what he says. You have a house filled with old relations who adore you, my fine nephew, and with honest old servants; you can marry some pretty little Breton maiden, religiously brought up, who will make you happy, and you can reserve your ambition for your oldest son, who will be three times richer than you are if you can be content to live quietly, economically, in the shadow in the peace of the Lord, in order to set free our family estates. It is as simple as the heart of a Breton. You will become a rich nobleman, not so quickly, but more solidly."

"Your aunt is right, my angel, she is as solicitous for your happiness as I am myself. If I do not succeed in arranging a marriage for you with Margaret, your uncle Lord Fitzwilliam's daughter, it is almost certain that Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël will give her property to whichever one of her nieces you will promise to cherish."

"You will find a few crowns here, too," said the old aunt in a low voice and with a mysterious air.

"Marry at my age?" said he, bestowing upon his

mother one of those glances which put maternal logic to flight.

"Am I to have no mad, delightful love-affairs? Shall I not tremble, palpitate, fear, gasp and lie beneath inexorable glances and move them to pity? Must I know nothing of untrammeled beauty, the caprices of the heart, the clouds that float beneath the azure sky of happiness and are dissipated by the breath of pleasure? Shall I not walk along the winding paths, wet with dew? Shall I not stand under a gutter-spout, not knowing that it rains, like the lovers Diderot saw? Shall I not take a red-hot coal in the palm of my hand like the Duc de Lorraine? Shall I not with silken ladders scale walls? shall I not hang from an old decayed trellis without making it bend? shall I not hide myself in a wardrobe or beneath a bed? Shall I know nothing of woman but conjugal submission, nothing of love but the placid flame of his lamp? Is my curiosity to be satisfied before it is aroused? Must I pass my life without experiencing those passions of the heart that exalt man's power? Must I be a conjugal monk? No! I have tasted of the apple of Parisian civilization. Do you not see that, by confining me within the chaste, ignorant limits of family life, you lighted the fire that is consuming me, and that I should have wasted my life without having adored the divinity which I see everywhere, in the green foliage as in the sands illumined by the sun, and in all the lovely, noble, refined women depicted in the books and poems I have devoured at Camille's house?

Alas! there is but one of such women at Guérande, and you are she, dear mother! The lovely blue birds of my dreams come from Paris, or from the pages of Lord Byron and Scott: Parisina, Effie, Minna! And one of them was the royal duchess whom I saw on the moors, through the furze and the genista, at sight of whom all the blood rushed to my heart!"

The baroness saw these thoughts more clearly, in a brighter, more vivid light than the printer's art makes possible to him who reads them here; she caught them all as they fell from that swift glance like arrows falling from an overturned quiver. Although she had never read Beaumarchais, she thought, with all women, that it would be a crime to force marriage upon this Chérubin.

"Oh! my dear child," she said, taking him in her arms, hugging him and kissing his lovely hair, which was still hers; "marry when you choose, but be happy! It is my duty not to annoy you."

Mariotte came in to set the table. Gasselin had gone out to exercise Calyste's horse, which its master had not ridden for two months. The three women, the mother, the aunt and Mariotte, with the natural cunning of their sex, were in league to lionize Calyste when he dined at home. Breton poverty, armed with the memories and habits of childhood, attempted to contend with the Parisian civilization so adequately represented at Les Touches, within two steps of Guérande. Mariotte tried to disgust her young master with the scientifically compounded dishes from Camille Maupin's

kitchen, as his mother and aunt outdid each other in their efforts to immesh their child in the network of their affection and put all comparison out of the question.

"There! you have a *lubine*"—a sort of barbel,—"Monsieur Calyste, and snipe, and such pancakes as you can't get anywhere else," said Mariotte with a sly, triumphant air, viewing herself in the white tablecloth, a veritable sheet of snow.

After dinner, when his old aunt had resumed her knitting and the curé of Guérande and the Chevalier du Halga arrived, allured by the prospective game of *mouche*, Calyste set out for Les Touches once more, on the plea that he must return Béatrix's letter.

Claude Vignon and Mademoiselle des Touches were still at table. The great critic had a tendency to gluttony, and he was encouraged in that vice by Félicité, who knew how indispensable a woman may make herself by complaisance in such matters. The dining-room, to which important additions had been made within a month, showed with what facility and promptitude a woman will adapt herself to the character, the profession, the passions and the tastes of the man she loves or desires to love. The table presented the sumptuous, brilliant appearance which modern luxury has imparted to the methods of service, assisted by the developments of mechanical industry.

The poor but noble house of Du Guénic knew not with what an adversary it had to deal, nor how

great a fortune was necessary to enter the lists against the silver plate, remodeled at Paris and brought thence by Mademoiselle des Touches, the porcelain, considered good enough for the country, the fine linen, the silver-gilt utensils, the table ornaments, and the science of Félicité's cook.

Calyste refused to partake of any of the liqueurs contained in one of the magnificent *cabarets* of costly wood, which resemble tabernacles.

"Here is your letter," he said with innocent ostentation, glancing at Claude, who was sipping a glass of curaçoa.

"Well, what do you think of it?" queried Mademoiselle des Touches, tossing the letter across the table to Vignon, who began to read it, taking up and putting down his little glass at intervals.

"Why—that the women in Paris are very fortunate; they all have men of genius to worship, men who love them."

"Ah! you haven't left your village yet," said Félicité with a laugh. "What! did you not see that she already loves him less, and that—"

"That is very clear," said Claude Vignon, who had read only the first page. "Does a woman ever take any heed of her position when she is really in love? is she as subtle a reasoner as the marchioness? does she count the chances? does she make fine distinctions? Dear Béatrix is attached to Conti by pride, she is doomed, as it were, to love him."

"Poor woman!" said Camille.

Calyste's eyes were fixed on the table, but he no

longer saw anything. The lovely woman in the fanciful costume sketched by Félicité that morning had appeared to him in a flood of light; she smiled at him and waved her fan; and the other hand. emerging from a sleeve of lace and cherry velvet, fell white and pure upon the swelling folds of her superb gown.

"That will be your chance," said Claude Vignon to Calyste, with a sardonic smile.

Calyste was wounded at the word *chance.*

"Don't put the idea of such an intrigue in the poor child's head; you don't know how dangerous these jests are. I know Béatrix; she has too much grandeur in her character to change, and Conti will be here, you know."

"Aha!" said Claude Vignon mockingly, "a little thrill of jealousy?"

"Do you think so?" said Camille, proudly.

"Your sight is keener than a mother's would be," was the reply.

"But would that be possible?" said Camille, pointing to Calyste.

"At all events, they would be a well-assorted couple," said Vignon. "She is ten years older than he, and he seems more like the girl."

"A girl, monsieur, who has already been under fire twice in La Vendée. If there had only been twenty thousand girls of the same sort—"

"I was praising you," said Vignon, "which is a much easier task than shaving you."

"I have a sword that shaves those whose beards are too long," Calyste retorted.

"And I am very good at making epigrams," said Vignon with a smile; "we are Frenchmen, the matter can be arranged."

Mademoiselle des Touches cast a pleading glance at Calyste, which calmed him instantly.

"Why is it," said she, to put an end to the dispute, "that young men like my Calyste always begin by loving women much older than themselves?"

"I know of no sentiment more artless or more noble," Vignon replied; "it is the result of the adorable qualities of youth. Moreover, how would old women end their days without their love? You are young and beautiful and will be for twenty years to come, so I can speak plainly before you," he added, with a significant glance at Mademoiselle des Touches. "In the first place, the semi-dowagers to whom young men address themselves know how to love better than young women. An adolescent youth is too much like a young woman for a young woman to attract him. Such a passion conflicts with the fable of Narcissus. Besides this repugnance, there is between them, it seems to me, a mutual lack of experience which tends to separate them. Thus the reason that the hearts of young women can be understood only by men whose adroitness is hidden behind a real or pretended passion, is the same, aside from the difference in the calibre of the minds concerned, as that which makes women of a certain age more likely to fascinate a boy: he has a delicious feeling that his suit will be successful, and the woman's vanity is deliciously flattered by his

suit. It is very natural also for youth to pounce upon fruits, and the autumn of a woman's life presents some that are very luscious and sweet-savored. And do those glances, bold and reserved at once, languishing at the proper moment, dipped in the last rays of love, and so warm and soft withal—do they count for nothing? The cunning refinement of speech, the magnificent golden shoulders so superbly developed, the rounded outlines, the graceful, undulating sweep of the portly figure, the dimpled hands, the smooth, unwrinkled skin, the forehead overflowing with sentiment, glowing in the light, the hair so carefully arranged and dressed, with narrow partings of white flesh artistically revealed, and the neck, with its superb folds, the alluring neck, where all the resources of art are displayed to bring out the contrast between the hair and the flesh tones, to place in bold relief all the insolent assurance of life and love—what of all these? The brunettes themselves at such times take on the complexion of a blonde, the amber hue of maturity. And then such women reveal in their smiles and unfold in their words, their knowledge of the world; they know how to talk, they betray society to you in its entirety to make you smile, they have moments of sublime dignity and pride, they utter shrieks of despair fit to rend the heart, farewells to love, which they can readily make of no effect and which serve to rekindle passion; they become young again by giving a different look to the most desperately simple things; they compel you

to raise them again and again after proclaiming their defeat with subtle coquetry, and the intoxication is contagious; their devotion is absolute: they listen to you, they love you, they cling to their love as the condemned man clings to the most trivial details of life; they resemble those lawyers who use all sorts of arguments in their causes without wearying the court, they employ all their resources—in a word, we know nothing of absolute love except through them. I do not think that one can ever forget them, any more than one forgets anything that is great or sublime. A young woman has a thousand distractions, these women have none; they no longer possess self-esteem or vanity or fondness for trifles; then love is like the Loire at its mouth; it is immense, it is increased by all the delusions, all the tributaries of life, and that is why—my child is silent," he said, observing the ecstatic attitude of Mademoiselle des Touches, who was pressing Calyste's hand convulsively, perhaps to thank him for having been the cause of such a moment, of a eulogy so high-flown that she could detect no snare therein.

During the remainder of the evening, Claude Vignon and Félicité fairly sparkled with wit, relating anecdotes and describing Parisian society to Calyste, who fell in love with Claude, for the mind exerts its fascinations with especial force upon people of heart.

"I should not be surprised to see the Marquise de Rochefide and Conti make their appearance

to-morrow; of course he is with her," said Claude toward the end of the evening. "When I left Le Croisic, the sailors had sighted a small Danish, Swedish or Norwegian vessel."

The words brought a flush to the cheeks of the impassive Camille.

That night Madame du Guénic waited again for her son until one o'clock, quite unable to understand what he was doing at Les Touches as Félicité did not love him.

"Why, he must be in their way," said this adorable mother to herself.—"Pray, what did you find to say all this time?" she asked when he came in.

"Oh! mother, I never passed a more delightful evening. Genius is a great, a sublime thing. Why didn't you give me genius? With genius you can choose the woman you love best and she is yours whether she will or no."

"But you are handsome, my own Calyste."

"Beauty is well placed only with you women. Besides, Claude Vignon is handsome, too. Men of genius have luminous brows, eyes that flash fire; and I, poor wretch, can do nothing but love."

"They say that that is enough, my angel," said she, kissing him on the forehead.

"Really?"

"So I have been told, I never made the trial."

It was Calyste's turn to kiss his mother's hand reverentially.

"I will love you for all those who would have worshiped you," he said.

"Dear boy! it is your duty perhaps, for you have inherited all my feelings. Pray do not be imprudent; try to love none but noble women, if you must love."

*

What young man, filled with overflowing but restrained vitality, would not have had the brilliant idea of going to Le Croisic to watch Madame de Rochefide's debarkation, in order to catch a glimpse of her, himself unseen? Calyste surprised his father and mother beyond measure, as they knew nothing of the fair marchioness's expected arrival, by starting off in the morning without waiting for his breakfast.

God knows with what agility the young Breton lifted his feet! It seemed as if a mysterious power were assisting him; he felt as light as air as he glided along close to the walls of Les Touches in order to avoid being seen. The adorable child was ashamed of his ardor, and had a horrible fear, perchance, of being made fun of: Félicité and Claude Vignon were so sharp! In such circumstances, moreover, young men believe that their foreheads are transparent.

He followed the windings of the road through the labyrinth of the salt marshes, reached the sands and crossed them almost at one bound, notwithstanding the fierce heat of the sun. He reached the steep bank, strengthened by a sea wall, at the foot of which is a house where travelers can find shelter from the sea-breezes, storms, hurricanes and rain. It is not always possible to cross the little arm of

the sea, for boats are not always at hand; and while they are coming across from the town it is often advisable to keep the horses, asses, freight or passengers' luggage under cover.

From that point the town of Le Croisic can be seen and the open sea beyond. Calyste soon saw two boats approaching, filled with effects of various kinds, bundles, boxes, carpet bags and chests, whose shape and appearance announced to the native, mysterious articles within, which could belong only to travelers of distinction. In one of the boats was a young woman with a straw hat and a green veil, accompanied by a man. Calyste felt a thrill of excitement; but from their appearance he soon realized that they were a servant and a lady's maid; he dared not question them.

"Are you going to Le Croisic, Monsieur Calyste?" asked the boatmen, who knew him; he replied with a shake of the head, decidedly abashed at having been called by name.

Calyste was overjoyed at the sight of a chest covered with tarred canvas, upon which he read the words: MADAME LA MARQUISE DE ROCHEFIDE. That name glistened before his eyes like a talisman; he had an indefinable feeling that the hand of fate was in it; he knew, but without suspecting that he knew, that he should love that woman; the most trifling things connected with her interested him even now, and aroused his curiosity. Why? In the scorching desert of its limitless, aimless desires, does not youth expend all its strength upon

the first woman who appears? Béatrix had inherited the love Camille disdained.

Calyste watched the debarkation, glancing from time to time toward Le Croisic, hoping to see a boat put out from the town and steer for the little promontory where the sea was moaning, and reveal to him the Béatrix who had already become in his thoughts what Béatrice was to Dante, an imperishable marble statue, on whose hands he would hang his flowers and his laurels. He stood with folded arms, lost in the reverie of expectation. It is a fact worthy of remark, but which has never been remarked, that, as we often submit our sentiments to one fixed resolve, we enter into a sort of undertaking with ourselves, and, as it were, create our own destiny: surely, chance has not so large a part in it as we believe.

"I don't see the horses," said the maid, sitting upon a trunk.

"And I don't see any traveled road," said the servant.

"There have been horses here, however," said the maid, pointing to the proofs of their presence.—"Monsieur," said she to Calyste, "is this the road to Guérande?"

"Yes," he replied. "Whom do you expect?"

"They wrote us that they would send to meet us from Les Touches.—If they should be late, I don't know how Madame la Marquise would dress," she said to the servant. "You ought to go on to Mademoiselle des Touches'. What a land of savages!"

Calyste had a vague sense of the falseness of his position.

"Has your mistress gone to Les Touches?" he asked.

"Mademoiselle came to fetch her at seven this morning," she replied. "Ah! here are the horses—"

Calyste darted away toward Guérande with the swiftness and agility of a chamois, making a detour in order not to be recognized by the people from Les Touches; but on the narrow road through the marshes, which he took he met two of them.

"Shall I go in or shall I not?" he thought as he spied the tops of the Les Touches pines.

He was afraid; he returned contrite and abashed to Guérande and walked up and down the mall, where he continued his deliberations. He shivered as he looked at Les Touches and scrutinized the weathercocks.

"She doesn't suspect my agitation!" he said to himself.

His capricious thoughts were like so many grappling irons that buried themselves in his heart and there held the marchioness fast. Calyste had not had these anticipatory joys and fears with Camille; he had met her riding and his desire was born as at the aspect of a lovely flower he would have liked to pluck. These uncertainties are like poems in timid hearts. Heated by the first flames of the imagination, such hearts revolt, wax wroth, are tranquillized and excited by turns, and attain in silence and

solitude the most exalted degree of love, before they have accosted the object of such violent emotions.

Calyste espied the Chevalier du Halga in the distance on the mall, walking with Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël; he heard his name mentioned and concealed himself. The chevalier and the old maid, thinking they were alone on the mall, were talking in a loud voice.

"When Charlotte de Kergarouët comes," said the chevalier, "keep her three or four months. How do you expect her to flirt with Calyste? she never stays long enough to undertake it; whereas, if they see each other every day, the two children will end by falling over head and ears in love, and you can marry them off next winter. If you say two words of your intentions to Charlotte, she will soon say four to Calyste, and a girl of sixteen will surely get the better of a woman of forty years and more."

The two old people turned to retrace their steps; Calyste heard no more, but he understood Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's purpose. In his condition of heart, nothing could be more fatal. Does a young man accept for his wife a young woman who is forced upon him, in the midst of the hopes consequent upon a preconceived passion?

Calyste, to whom Charlotte de Kergarouët was perfectly indifferent, felt disposed to rebuff her. He was inaccessible to any pecuniary considerations, he had adapted his life from childhood to the mediocrity of the paternal household, and, furthermore, he knew nothing of Mademoiselle de

Pen-Hoël's wealth, seeing that she lived in as poor a fashion as the Du Guénics. In a word, a young man reared as Calyste had been was certain to ascribe no importance to aught but the sentiments, and all his thoughts belonged to the marchioness. What was little Charlotte in face of the portrait Camille had sketched to him? The companion of his childhood, whom he treated as a sister!

He did not return to the house until five o'clock. When he entered the hall, his mother, with a sad smile, handed him a note from Mademoiselle des Touches:

"MY DEAR CALYSTE:

"The fair Marquise de Rochefide has come and we rely upon you to help us to celebrate her arrival. Claude, who is forever joking, insists that you will be *Bice* and that she will be *Dante*. The honor of Bretagne and of the house of Du Guénic is concerned in offering a Casteran a fitting reception. Come soon.

"Your friend,

"CAMILLE MAUPIN.

"Come informally, just as you are; or you will make us appear ridiculous."

Calyste showed the letter to his mother and departed.

"Who are the Casterans?" she asked the baron.

"An old Norman family, connected with William

the Conqueror," he replied. "Their arms are *tierce in fesse, azure, gules and sable, with the running horse shod with gold.* The fair creature for whom Le Gars gave up his life in 1800, at Fougères, was the daughter of a Casteran, who became a nun at Séez and was afterwards abbess there, after she was deserted by the Duc de Verneuil."

"And the Rochefides?"

"I don't know that name; I should have to see their crest."

The baroness was somewhat comforted to learn that Marquise Béatrix de Rochefide belonged to an old family; but she still felt a sort of terror at the thought that her son was exposed to fresh seductions.

Calyste as he walked along was conscious of emotions that were at the same time violent and delicious; he had a choking sensation at the throat, his heart was swollen, his brain in a whirl; he was consumed by fever. He attempted to slacken his speed, but a superior force kept him rushing on. All young men have experienced the impetuosity of the senses aroused by a vague hope: a subtle fire blazes within, and sheds a light about them like the clouds painted about the divine personages in religious pictures, and through it they see nature alight and woman radiant. Are they not at such times like saints, full of faith and hope, of ardor and purity?

The young Breton found the party assembled in the small salon of Camille's suite. It was then

about six o'clock; the setting sun was darting through the window its ruddy beams, broken by the trees; the atmosphere was still and the salon was in the half-darkness that women love so well.

"Here is the deputy from Bretagne," said Camille Maupin smilingly to her friend, waving her hand toward Calyste as he put aside the tapestry portière. "He's as punctual as a king."

"Did you recognize his step?" said Claude Vignon.

Calyste bowed low before the marchioness, who replied with a motion of her head; he had not looked at her. He took the hand Claude Vignon offered him and pressed it.

"This is the great man of whom we have told you so much, Gennaro Conti," said Camille, without answering Vignon's question.

She pointed to a man of middle height, of slight, spare build, with chestnut hair, eyes that were almost red, and fair complexion marred by red blotches; his head bore so close a resemblance to the familiar head of Lord Byron that it would be superfluous to describe it, save to say that he carried it somewhat better, perhaps. Conti was extremely proud of the resemblance.

"I am enchanted to meet monsieur, having but one day to pass at Les Touches," said Gennaro.

"It is for me to say that of you," replied Calyste with sufficient ease of manner.

"He is as beautiful as an angel," said the marchioness to Félicité.

Standing between the divan and the two ladies, Calyste heard these words indistinctly, although they were whispered in Félicité's ear. He sat down in an easy-chair and glanced stealthily at the marchioness several times. In the soft light of the setting sun he espied, half-reclining upon the divan as if she were posing for some sculptor, a white, serpentine form that made his head swim.

Félicité had unwittingly served her friend well by her description. Béatrix was more beautiful than the portrait, not at all exaggerated, painted by Camille the day before. Was it not with an eye to the expected guest that Béatrix had placed in her royally beautiful hair, bunches of bluebells, which brought out the pale tone of her crisp curls, arranged to fall playfully down by her cheeks as a fitting accompaniment to her face? The half circles below her eyes, darkened by fatigue, were like the purest, most variable mother-of-pearl, and her complexion was as brilliant as her eyes. Beneath her white skin, fine as the satiny pellicle of an egg, the life-blood throbbed in glistening, bluish streams. The delicacy of her features was beyond expression. The forehead appeared to be transparent. The graceful, shapely head, admirably poised upon a long neck of marvelous form, was adapted to the most varying expressions. The waist, which could be taken in the hands, was enchanting in its suggestion of graceful nonchalance. The bare shoulders gleamed in the shadow like a white camellia in a mass of black hair. The throat, cleverly disclosed

to view, although covered with a transparent neckerchief, afforded a glimpse of two contours of exquisite, alluring beauty. The white muslin dress dotted with blue flowers, the full sleeves, the pointed bodice with no girdle, the buskin-like shoes with straps crossed over stockings of Scotch thread, denoted a most remarkable knowledge of the art of dressing. Earrings of silver filigree-work, a miracle of Genoese workmanship, which would soon become fashionable, doubtless, were perfectly in harmony with the delicious soft effect of the fair hair starred with bluebells.

At a single glance, Calyste's greedy eyes seized upon these charms and engraved them upon his heart. The fair Béatrix and the dark Félicité might have recalled the contrasts so popular among English sculptors and draughtsmen for use on *keepsakes.* There were woman's strength and woman's weakness in their most perfect development—a complete antithesis. The two women could never be rivals, for each had her own empire. It was a delicate periwinkle or lily beside a superb, brilliant red poppy, a turquoise beside a ruby. In a moment, Calyste was in the grasp of a passion that crowned the secret labor of his hopes, his fears, his uncertainties. Mademoiselle des Touches had aroused his mind, Béatrix set fire to his heart and his imagination. The young Breton felt a mighty force spring up within him—a force to overpower everything, to respect nothing. And so he darted at Conti the jealous, threatening, bitter, fearful glare

caused by the feeling of rivalry he had never felt for Claude Vignon.

Calyste exerted all his strength to restrain himself, thinking nevertheless that the Turks were justified in shutting up their women, and that the beautiful creatures should be forbidden to exhibit themselves in their seductive coquetry to young men on fire with passion. This violent storm was allayed as soon as Béatrix turned her eyes upon him and he heard her soft voice; the poor child already feared her as he feared God.

The dinner-bell rang.

"Calyste, give your arm to the marchioness," said Mademoiselle des Touches, putting her right arm through Conti's and her left through Vignon's and standing aside to allow the young couple to pass.

To descend the old stairway at Les Touches in this fashion was, to Calyste, like going into battle for the first time: his heart failed him, he could think of nothing to say, a fine perspiration stood out on his forehead and his back; his arm trembled so that on the last stair the marchioness said to him:

"What is the matter?"

"Why," he replied in a choking voice, "I have never in my life seen a woman as lovely as you, except my mother, and I cannot master my emotion."

"Haven't you Camille Maupin here?"

"Oh! what a difference!" said Calyste artlessly.

"Well, well, Calyste," Félicité whispered in his ear; "didn't I tell you that you would forget me as

completely as if I had never existed? Sit there, at her right, and Vignon at her left.—As for you, Gennaro," she laughed, "I will keep you by me and we will watch her coquetries."

The peculiar emphasis with which Camille uttered these last words impressed Claude, who darted at her the sly, quasi-absent-minded glance, which, in him, denoted that the powers of observation were on the alert. He did not cease to watch Mademoiselle des Touches during the dinner.

"Coquetries!" repeated the marchioness, drawing off her gloves and showing her magnificent hands; "I have sufficient justification. On one side I have a poet," she added, pointing to Claude, "and on the other, poetry."

Gennaro Conti bestowed a flattering glance upon Calyste. In the bright light, Béatrix was even lovelier than before. The white light of the candles produced the effect of satin on her forehead, kindled sparks in her gazelle-like eyes and played through her silky curls, making them gleam and bringing to light some golden threads. She threw back her gauze scarf with a graceful gesture and uncovered her neck. Calyste thereupon perceived the delicate nape, as white as milk, marked by a sturdy furrow that parted in two waves, flowing toward each shoulder with graceful and deceptive symmetry. These transformations in which women indulge produce little effect in society, where all eyes are sated, but they make cruel ravages in hearts as inexperienced as Calyste's. That neck,

so unlike Camille's, indicated that Béatrix's disposition was entirely different from hers. The pride of race, a tenacity of purpose peculiar to the nobility, and an indefinable suggestion of hardness were recognizable in this double ligament, which is perhaps the last trace of the power of the ancient conquerors.

Calyste had the utmost difficulty in going through the form of eating; he was so afflicted with nervousness that it took away his appetite. As in all young men, nature had fallen a victim to the convulsions that precede first love and engrave it so deeply in the heart. At that age, the ardor of the heart, held in check by moral ardor, leads to an internal conflict, which explains the long, respectful hesitation, the profound meditation of affection and the absence of all calculation,—attractions peculiar to young men whose hearts and lives are pure.

As he studied—stealthily, it is true, in order not to arouse the jealous Gennaro's suspicions—the details that make the Marquise de Rochefide so nobly beautiful, Calyste was soon oppressed by the majesty of the beloved object; he felt dwarfed by the elevation of certain of her glances, by the imposing expression of a face overflowing with aristocratic sentiments, by a certain pride which women express by slight movements, by the manner of holding the head, by admirable moderation of gesture—all of which are less plastic, less studied effects than is commonly supposed.

These trivial details of their changes of feature

correspond to the countless qualms and agitations of their hearts. There is sentiment in all these expressions. The false situation in which Béatrix was placed, forced her to keep watch upon herself, to make herself imposing without being ridiculous, and all women in the higher ranks of society know how to attain this result, which is the obstacle in the path of vulgar women.

From Félicité's glances, Béatrix divined the internal adoration she was inspiring in her neighbor, and that it was unworthy of her to encourage it; she therefore bestowed upon Calyste at the proper moment a repressive glance or two that fell upon him like avalanches of snow. The poor fellow complained to Mademoiselle des Touches by a look in which she could detect the tears held back in his heart by superhuman energy, and Félicité amiably inquired why he was eating nothing. Calyste stuffed himself at her command, and made a pretence of taking part in the conversation. The insupportable thought of being a bore instead of making himself agreeable to her was hammering at his brain. He was the more shamefaced because he saw behind the marchioness's chair, the servant he had seen in the morning on the jetty, who, of course, would mention his curiosity.

Whether he was contrite or happy, Madame de Rochefide took no further notice of her neighbor. Mademoiselle des Touches having started her upon her Italian travels, she described in an entertaining way, the point-blank passion with which a Russian

diplomatist at Florence had honored her, making sport of the beardless youths who pounce upon women, like locusts upon anything green. She made Claude Vignon laugh and Gennaro and Félicité herself, although her shafts of ridicule went to Calyste's heart, and through the buzzing in his ears and his brain he heard only disconnected words. The poor boy did not register an oath, as certain persistent youths might have done, that he would have the woman at any price; no, he was not angry, he was suffering. When he detected a purpose on the part of Béatrix to immolate him at Gennaro's feet, he said to himself: "Let me serve her in some way!" and allowed himself to be maltreated with lamb-like meekness.

"How can you, who admire poesy so profoundly, receive it so unkindly?" said Claude Vignon to the marchioness. "Is not such artless admiration, so sweet in its expression, so devoted, and with no trace of ulterior motive, the true poesy of the heart? Confess that it leaves you with a feeling of pleasure and well-being."

"Most assuredly," said she; "but we should be very unhappy and, more than that, very unworthy, if we yielded to all the passions we inspire."

"If you didn't make a selection," said Conti, "we should not be so proud of being loved."

"When shall I be selected and distinguished by a woman?" thought Calyste, with difficulty repressing his painful emotion.

He blushed thereupon like a wounded man when

a finger is carelessly pressed upon his wound. Mademoiselle des Touches was touched by the expression of his face and tried to comfort him with a sympathetic glance. That glance Claude Vignon detected. From that moment, the critic abounded in good humor, which he expended in sarcasm; he argued with Béatrix that love existed only through desire, that most women deceived themselves when they fell in love, that they loved very frequently for reasons unknown to themselves as well as to the men concerned, that they sometimes wanted to deceive themselves, and that the noblest of them were artificial.

"Keep your opinions for books, don't criticize our sentiments," said Camille, with an imperious glance at him.

The dinner ceased to be cheerful. Claude Vignon's mockery had made the two women thoughtful. Calyste was conscious of horrible suffering amid the bliss that the mere sight of Béatrix afforded him. Conti tried to read the marchioness's thoughts in her eyes.

When the dinner was at an end, Mademoiselle des Touches took Calyste's arm, turned the other two men over to the marchioness and allowed them to go before so that she might have an opportunity to say to the young Breton:

"My dear boy, if the marchioness falls in love with you, she will throw Conti through the window; but you are behaving just now in a way to tighten their bonds. Suppose she should be overjoyed by

your adoration, could she afford to notice it? Be a man."

"She was harsh to me, she will never love me," said Calyste, "and if she doesn't love me, I shall die."

"Die!—you, my dear Calyste?" said Camille. "You're a child. You didn't die for me, did you?"

"You became my friend," he replied.

After the small talk that the coffee always engenders, Vignon begged Conti to sing. Mademoiselle des Touches took her place at the piano. She and Gennaro sang the *Dunque il mio bene tu mia sarai,* the last duo in Zingarelli's *Romeo and Juliet,* one of the most pathetic productions in modern music. The passage *Di tanti palpiti* expresses love in all its grandeur.

Calyste, sitting in the chair in which Félicité had told him the marchioness' story, listened religiously. Béatrix and Vignon were on opposite sides of the piano. Conti's sublime voice blended perfectly with Félicité's. Both had sung the duo many times, they knew all its possibilities, and united their efforts to make the most of them with marvelous effect. It was at that moment what the musician intended to create, a poem of divine melancholy, the adieux to life of two swans. When it was done, each of the auditors was overpowered by sensations which ordinary applause is inadequate to express.

"Ah! music is the first of the arts!" cried the marchioness.

"Camille places youth and beauty first, the first of all poems," said Claude Vignon.

Mademoiselle des Touches looked at Claude, concealing a vague feeling of uneasiness. Béatrix, not seeing Calyste, turned her head as if to discover what effect the music had had upon him, less through any interest in him than for Conti's satisfaction: she espied in the window recess, a white face wet with great tears. At that sight, as if she felt a sharp pain, she quickly turned away and looked at Gennaro.

Not only had Music reared its head before Calyste, touched him with its divine wand and torn away the veil that hid creation from him, but he was stricken dumb by Conti's genius. Despite what Camille Maupin had told him of his character, he believed then that he had a lovely soul, a heart overflowing with love. How contend against such an artist? how could a woman not adore him forever? The music entered his heart as if it were another heart. The poor child was as much overwhelmed by poetic feeling as by despair; he seemed to himself such a poor creature! This ingenuous self-accusation of nonentity could be read in his face, mingled with his admiration. He did not notice Béatrix's gesture, as she called Mademoiselle des Touches' attention to him by a sign.

"Oh! the adorable heart!" cried Félicité. "Conti, you will never receive applause that will be worth as much as that child's homage. Let us sing a trio.—Come, Béatrix, my dear!"

When the marchioness, Félicité and Conti gathered about the piano, Calyste rose softly, unseen by them, threw himself on one of the sofas in the bedroom, the door of which was open, and lay there plunged in despair.

PART SECOND

THE DRAMA

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"What's the matter, my boy?" said Claude, gliding silently in Calyste's wake, and taking his hand. "You are in love, you fancy that your love is disdained; but nothing of the sort is true. In a few days, you will have the field to yourself here, you will be king, you will be loved by more than one person; in fact, if you only knew how to behave judiciously, you would be a sort of sultan."

"What do you say?" cried Calyste, rising and beckoning Claude to follow him into the library. "Who in this house loves me?"

"Camille," Claude replied.

"Camille loves me!" demanded Calyste. "Why, what about yourself?"

"I," said Claude, "I—"

He did not finish. He sat down and, with a profoundly melancholy air, laid his head against a cushion.

"I am tired of life and I haven't the courage to leave it," he said, after a moment's silence. "I should be glad to know that I am mistaken in what

I have just said to you; but within a day or two, more than one bright ray of light has flashed upon me. I didn't walk about among the rocks of Le Croisic for pleasure, God knows! The bitterness of my words when I returned and found you talking with Camille, had its source in the depths of my wounded self-esteem. I shall have an explanation with Camille very soon. Two minds as clear-sighted as hers and mine cannot misunderstand each other. Between two professional duelists, the combat does not last long. So I am able to announce my approaching departure to you beforehand. Yes, I shall leave Les Touches, perhaps to-morrow, with Conti. It is certain that strange things, yes, terrible things perhaps, will happen when we are no longer here, and I shall have to regret my absence from these contests of passion, so rare in France and so dramatic. You are very young for such a perilous struggle; you arouse my interest. If it were not for the profound disgust with which women inspire me, I would stay and help you to play the game; it is a difficult one and you may lose it, for you have to do with two extraordinary women, and you are too much in love with one of them already to make use of the other. Béatrix is certain to have a streak of obstinacy in her character, and Camille has elements of grandeur. Perhaps you will be sucked up by the eddying whirlpool of passion and shattered, like a frail and delicate vessel, between those two reefs. Be on your guard."

Calyste's stupefaction on hearing these words made it possible for Claude to say them and leave the young Breton, who was like a traveler among the Alps, to whom a guide has shown the depth of an abyss by throwing in a stone. To learn from Claude's own mouth that he, Calyste, was loved by Camille, at the moment when he felt that his heart was given to Béatrix for ever! the situation bore too heavily upon so young and innocent a heart. Weighed down by overwhelming regret for the past, driven to despair in the present by the difficulty of his position between Béatrix whom he loved, and Camille whom he had ceased to love, yet by whom Claude said that he was beloved, the poor boy was half-distracted, and he sat lost in thought, uncertain what course to pursue. He tried in vain to conjecture Félicité's reasons for rejecting his love and hurrying to Paris to bring back Claude Vignon. At intervals, Béatrix's clear, fresh voice reached his ears and renewed the violent emotion which he had left the small salon to avoid. Again and again he felt almost unable to master a fierce desire to seize her and carry her away. What was to become of him? Should he come to Les Touches again? Knowing that Camille loved him, how could he worship Béatrix under her roof? He could find no solution to his difficulties.

Insensibly, silence fell upon the house. He heard, but did not heed, the sound of several doors closing. Suddenly, he heard the clock strike twelve in the adjoining bedroom, which was brightly lighted,

and Claude's voice and Camille's aroused him from the benumbing contemplation of his future. Before he could make known his presence, he heard these terrifying words uttered by Vignon:

"You arrived at Paris madly in love with Calyste; but you were alarmed by the probable consequences of such a passion at your age—it would lead you into a yawning pit, a hell, perhaps to suicide! Love has no real existence unless it believes itself to be everlasting, and you saw the inevitable heartbreaking separation but a few steps away in your life: for distaste and old age soon put an end to a sublime poem. You remembered *Adolphe*, the ghastly conclusion of the loves of Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant, who were, however, much better adapted to each other in point of age than you and Calyste. You thereupon took me, as soldiers take fascines to throw up intrenchments between themselves and the enemy. But, if you desired to make me fond of Les Touches, was it not so that you might pass your days here in secret adoration of your god? To carry out your ignoble yet sublime project, you must find a man of common mould or else a man so absorbed by lofty ideas that he could easily be deceived. You believed me to be simple-minded, as easy to hoodwink as a man of genius. It seems that I am simply a man of intelligence: I divined your purpose. When I dilated yesterday upon the charms of women at your age, by way of explaining to you why Calyste loved you, do you think that I took your fascinated,

enchanted, sparkling glances for myself? Had I not already read your heart? Your eyes were turned upon me, it is true, but your heart was beating for Calyste. You have never been loved, my poor Maupin, and you never will be after refusing the luscious fruit that chance put in your way at the gates of the hell of womankind, the gates that are made to swing upon their hinges by the figure 50!"

"But why should love turn its back on me?" said she in an altered voice. "Tell me, you who know everything!"

"Because you are not lovable," he replied; "you do not bend to love, but love must bend to you. You may have the faculty of giving way to the mischievous impulses of the *gamin*, but you have no childishness of heart, your mind is too profound, you never were artless, and you cannot begin to be so to-day. Your charm is the charm of mystery, it is abstract and not active. In short, your strength of character repels men of equal strength who foresee a constant struggle. Your power may prove an attraction to youthful hearts which, like Calyste's, love to be patronized; but eventually it wearies them. You are great and sublime: you must submit to the disadvantages of those two qualities; they are wearisome."

"What a judgment!" cried Camille. "Can I not be a woman? am I a monstrosity?"

"Perhaps so," said Claude.

"We will see!" cried the woman, stung to the quick.

"'Adieu, my dear; to-morrow I go. I bear you no ill-will, Camille: I consider you the grandest of women; but if I should continue to serve you as a screen from the cold, or from the heat," said Claude with a significant change of inflection, "you would despise me beyond words. We can part without sorrow or remorse: we have no joys to regret, no disappointed hopes. For you, as for an infinitely small number of men of genius, love is not what nature made it: an imperious necessity, with whose gratification it connects keen but fleeting pleasures, and which ceases to exist; you see it as Christianity has created it: an ideal kingdom, full of noble sentiments, of grandeur in petty things, of poesy, of intellectual emotions, of devotion, of flowers of morality, of enchanting harmonies,—a kingdom situated far beyond the vulgarities of the common herd, but whither two hearts united in one angel are wafted on the wings of pleasure. That is what I hoped for: I thought to grasp one of the keys that open to us the door, closed to so many, through which one passes to the infinite. You were already there! And thus you deceived me. I return to destitution, to my vast prison—Paris. Such a disillusionment at the beginning of my career would have been enough to make me shun women: to-day it casts a shadow of disenchantment over my heart that plunges me forever into ghastly solitude, and I shall not have the faith that assisted the Fathers to people it with sacred images. That, my dear Camille, is what intellectual superiority brings us to;

we can both fitly sing the melancholy hymn that a poet has put in the mouth of Moses addressing God:

"'O Lord, thou hast made me powerful and lonely!'"

At that moment Calyste made his appearance.

"I ought to let you know that I am here," he said.

Mademoiselle des Touches' face expressed the utmost dismay; a sudden flush made her cheeks the color of flame. During this whole scene she was more beautiful than at any other moment in her life.

"We thought you had gone, Calyste," said Claude; "but this involuntary indiscretion on both sides can do no harm: perhaps you will feel more at ease here at Les Touches now that you know Félicité through and through. Her silence tells me that I am not mistaken as to the part she proposed that I should play. She loves you, as I told you, but she loves you for your sake and not for her own, —a sentiment that few women are capable of conceiving and acting upon: few of them know the joy of sorrow kept alight by desire; that is one of the exalted passions reserved for man,—but she is partly man!" he said, jestingly. "Your passion for Béatrix will cause her to suffer and, at the same time, make her happy."

Tears came to Félicité's eyes, and she dared not look either at the terrible Claude Vignon, or the ingenuous Calyste. She was dismayed to find that

her sentiments had been discovered, she did not believe that any man, however keen his insight, could fathom such cruel delicacy of conduct, such exalted heroism as hers.

When he saw how humiliated she was by the disclosure of her grandeur, Calyste shared the emotion of this woman whom he had raised so high, and whom he now saw cowering in the dust. Obeying an irresistible impulse, he threw himself at her feet and kissed her hands, hiding in them his face, which was wet with tears.

"Claude, do not desert me," said she; "what would become of me?"

"What have you to fear?" replied the critic. "Calyste already loves the marchioness like a madman. Surely you could place no more impassable barrier between yourself and him than this passion you have yourself aroused. It will serve you as well as I could do. Yesterday, there was danger both for you and him; but to-day, everything will tend to afford you the joy a mother would feel," he added, with a mocking glance. "You will be proud of his triumphs."

Mademoiselle des Touches glanced at Calyste, who, at that last remark, had suddenly raised his head. Claude Vignon's vengeance went no farther than to take what pleasure he could in watching the confusion of Calyste and Félicité.

"You gave him a push toward Madame de Rochefide," Claude continued, "and now he is under the charm. You dug your own grave. If you had

confided in me, you would have avoided the disasters that are in store for you."

"Disasters!" cried Camille Maupin, taking Calyste's head, raising it to her face, kissing his hair, and shedding tears upon it in profusion. "No, Calyste, you must forget all that you have heard and rely upon me for nothing!"

She rose, drew herself up to her full height before the two men and crushed them by the lightning-like flashes from her eyes, from which her whole heart shone forth.

"While Claude was speaking," she continued, "I realized the beauty and grandeur of a hopeless love; is it not the only sentiment that draws us near to God? Do not love me, Calyste; but I will love you as no other woman will!"

It was the wildest scream that ever wounded eagle uttered in its eyry. Claude bent his knee, took Félicité's hand and kissed it.

"Leave us, my friend," said she; "your mother may be anxious."

Calyste returned to Guérande with lagging steps, turning now and again to watch the light that shone in the windows of Béatrix's apartments. He was surprised himself to find how little compassion he felt for Camille; he was almost angry with her for having deprived him of fifteen months of happiness. Then he would be conscious again of the inward thrill that her words had caused him, he would feel in his hair the tears she had left there, he would suffer in sympathy with her suffering, he would

imagine that he could hear the groans that that noble woman, so ardently desired a few days before, was doubtless uttering.

As he opened the gate of the paternal mansion, where profound silence reigned, he saw through the window, by the light of the curious lamp we have described, his mother awaiting his return and working the while. Tears came to Calyste's eyes at the sight.

"What has happened now?" asked Fanny, whose face expressed painful anxiety.

Calyste's only reply was to take his mother in his arms and kiss her cheeks and forehead and hair in one of those passionate outbursts of affection which gladden the hearts of mothers, filling them with the subtle flames of the life they have given.

"You are the one I love," said Calyste almost shamefaced and blushing hotly; "you, who live only for me, you, whom I would like to make happy."

"But you are not in your ordinary frame of mind, my dear," said the baroness, gazing at her son. "What has happened to you?"

"Camille loves me and I no longer love her," he said.

The baroness drew Calyste to her side and kissed him on the forehead, and, in the profound silence of that ancient, dark and tapestried apartment, he heard the violent beating of his mother's heart. The Irish woman was jealous of Camille, and she had had a presentiment of the truth. As she sat waiting for her son night after night, the mother

had divined that woman's passion; guided by the light of persistent meditation, she had penetrated Camille's heart, and, although unable to put her thoughts into words, she had imagined that she could read there a capricious desire to become a mother. Calyste's tale terrified the simple-minded, innocent creature.

"Very well," said she after a pause, "love Madame de Rochefide if you choose; she will not cause me such anxiety."

Béatrix was not free, she would not change any of the plans that had been formed for Calyste's happiness, at least, so Fanny believed, and she saw in her a sort of daughter-in-law to love, and not another mother to contend against.

"But Béatrix will not love me!" cried Calyste.

"Perhaps not," rejoined the baroness slyly. "Didn't you tell me that she would be alone to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"Well, my child!" said the mother, blushing. "Jealousy lies at the bottom of all our hearts; I did not expect to find it stirring some day in mine, for I did not believe that anyone was likely to dispute my claim to my Calyste's love!"—She sighed.—"I thought," she continued, "that marriage would be to you what it has been to me. What a light you have let in upon my heart these last two months! what bright colors your passion—a perfectly natural passion—has assumed, poor dear! Well, pretend still to be in love with your Mademoiselle des

Touches; the marchioness will be jealous of her, and you will gain your end."

"Ah! my dear good mother, Camille wouldn't have suggested that to me!" cried Calyste, putting his arm about his mother's waist and kissing her neck.

"You make me very wicked, you bad boy," said she, overjoyed by the radiant expression that hope brought to her son's face, as he gayly ascended the turret stairway.

The next morning, Calyste sent Gasselin to do sentry duty on the road from Guérande to Saint-Nazaire, to watch until Mademoiselle des Touches' carriage passed, and to count the persons it contained.

Gasselin returned just as all the family had assembled and were breakfasting.

"What is going on?" inquired Mademoiselle du Guénic; "Gasselin is running as if there were a fire in Guérande."

"He must have caught the field-mouse," said Mariotte, as she brought in the coffee, milk and rolls.

"He is coming from the town, not from the garden," rejoined Mademoiselle du Guénic.

"But the field-mouse's hole is outside the wall, on the square," said Mariotte.

"Monsieur le Chevalier, there were five of them, —four inside and the coachman."

"Two ladies on the back seat?" queried Calyste.

"And two gentlemen on the front seat," Gasselin replied.

"Saddle my father's horse, ride after them so that you reach Saint-Nazaire just as the boat starts for Paimbœuf, and, if the two men go aboard, ride back at full speed and tell me."

Gasselin left the room.

"The devil is in you, my nephew!" exclaimed old Zéphirine.

"Pray let him amuse himself, sister," cried the baron; "he was as gloomy as an owl and now he's as blithe as a lark."

"Perhaps you told him that our dear Charlotte is expected, did you?" said the old maid, turning toward her sister-in-law.

"No," the baroness replied.

"I thought that he meant to go and meet her," said Mademoiselle du Guénic, slyly.

"If Charlotte stays with her aunt three months, he will have plenty of time to see her," retorted the baroness.

"Well, well, sister, what has happened since yesterday, pray?" queried the old maid. "You were so delighted to learn that Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël was going to bring her niece to us this morning!"

"Jacqueline wants to force me to marry Charlotte to save me from perdition, aunt," laughed Calyste, darting a significant glance at his mother. "I was on the mall when she was talking with Monsieur du Halga; but it didn't occur to her that it would send me to perdition more surely to marry me off at my age."

"It is written," cried the old maid, interrupting Calyste, "that I shall not end my days in tranquillity or happiness. I would have liked to see our family perpetuated, and some of our estates redeemed,—but I must give up all thought of it. Can you, my fine nephew, allow anything to outweigh such duties?"

"Why!" said the baron, "will Mademoiselle des Touches prevent Calyste from marrying when the time comes? I must go and see her."

"I can assure you, father, that Félicité will never be an obstacle to my marriage."

"I don't understand it at all," said the old blind woman, who knew nothing of her nephew's sudden passion for the Marquise de Rochefide.

The mother kept her son's secret; in such matters women instinctively hold their peace. The old maid fell into profound thought, listening with eagerness to the voices and to every sound, seeking to divine the mystery they were concealing from her.

Gasselin soon returned and told his young master that he had had no need to go to Saint-Nazaire to ascertain that Mademoiselle des Touches and her friend would return alone, as he had learned that fact in the town from Bernus, the carrier, who had the luggage of both gentlemen in his charge.

"They will be alone when they return!" cried Calyste. "Saddle my horse."

From his young master's tone, Gasselin thought that some serious affair was on hand; he saddled

both horses, loaded the pistols without a word to anyone, and dressed himself, in order to attend Calyste.

Calyste was so content with the knowledge that Claude and Gennaro had gone, that he did not think of the encounter in store for him at Saint-Nazaire; his thoughts were full of the pleasure of accompanying the marchioness; he took his aged father's hands and pressed them affectionately, kissed his mother and embraced his aunt.

"After all, I love him better like this than when he is so depressed," said old Zéphirine.

"Where are you going, chevalier?" the baron inquired.

"To Saint-Nazaire."

"The devil! And when is the wedding to be?" rejoined the baron, thinking that his son was in haste to see Charlotte de Kergarouët. "I am very late about becoming a grandfather; it's high time."

When Gasselin appeared, evidently intending to accompany Calyste, it occurred to the young man that he might return in the carriage with Camille and Béatrix, and turn his horse over to Gasselin; so he clapped him on the shoulder, saying:

"That was a bright idea of yours."

"So I think," was Gasselin's reply.

"My boy," said the baron, coming out upon the stoop with Fanny, "be careful of the horses; they have twelve leagues to do."

Calyste rode away after exchanging a most searching glance with his mother.

"Dear love," said she, watching him bend his head as he passed through the arched gateway.

"May God protect him!" said the baron, "for we could not reproduce him."

This remark, uttered in the jovial tone characteristic of provincial noblemen, made the baroness shudder.

"My nephew doesn't care enough for Charlotte to go and meet her," said the old maid to Mariotte as she was removing the breakfast dishes.

"A great lady, a marchioness, has arrived at Les Touches, and he's running after her! Bah! it's what all boys do," said Mariotte.

"They will kill him," said Mademoiselle du Guénic.

"That won't kill him, mademoiselle; far from it," rejoined Mariotte, who seemed happy in Calyste's happiness.

Calyste was riding at a pace calculated to founder his horse, when Gasselin very sagely asked him if he wished to arrive before the boat sailed. That was by no means his purpose, for he did not wish to show himself to Conti or Claude. He therefore slackened his pace, and began to look complacently at the double ruts made by the wheels of the *calèche* in the sandy portions of the road. His gayety passed all bounds as he thought: "She passed this way; she will return this way; her eyes have rested on these shrubs, these trees!"

"What a lovely road!" he said to Gasselin.

"Ah! monsieur, Bretagne is the finest country in

the world," replied the servant. "Are there flowers in the hedges anywhere else, and such shady, winding roads as that?"

"Nowhere, Gasselin."

"There comes Bernus's carriage," said Gasselin.

"Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël and her niece will be inside," said Calyste; "let us get out of sight."

"Here, monsieur?—Are you mad? Why, we're on the sand."

The vehicle, which was toiling up a sandy hillside above Saint-Nazaire, appeared before Calyste's eyes in the artless simplicity of its Breton construction. To his great amazement, it was full.

"We left Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël and her sister and niece behind," said the driver to Gasselin; "they are in great trouble; all the places were engaged by the custom-house people."

"I am lost!" cried Calyste.

The carriage was, in fact, filled inside and out with employés, on their way, doubtless, to relieve those then on duty on the salt marshes.

When Calyste reached the little esplanade around the church of Saint-Nazaire, from which Paimbœuf can be seen and the majestic mouth of the Loire struggling with the sea, he found Camille and the marchioness there waving their handkerchiefs as a last farewell to the two passengers whom the steamboat was bearing away. Béatrix was bewitching in that posture; her face softened by the shadow of a rice-straw hat, trimmed with poppies, and secured by puce-colored ribbons. She wore a

dress of flowered muslin, her tiny little foot with its green gaiter was thrust forward, as she was leaning upon her dainty sun-umbrella which she held in her lovely gloved hand. Nothing makes a grander impression upon the eye than a woman standing at the summit of a high rock like a statue on its pedestal.

Conti could see Calyste as he accosted Camille.

"I thought," said the young man, "that you would be driving back alone."

"You did well, Calyste," said Mademoiselle des Touches, as she shook hands with him.

Béatrix turned, met her youthful lover's eye, and bestowed upon him the most imperious glance at her command. A smile which the marchioness detected upon Camille's eloquent lips, brought her to a realizing sense of the vulgarity of that method, worthy of a bourgeois matron. She thereupon said to Calyste with a smile:

"Isn't it slightly impertinent of you to imagine that Camille was likely to be bored by my society?"

"One man for two widows is none too many, my dear," said Mademoiselle des Touches, taking Calyste's arm and leaving Béatrix intently watching the vessel.

At that moment Calyste heard the voices of Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, Charlotte and Gasselin, in the steep street that goes down to what we must call the harbor of Saint-Nazaire, all three, chattering like magpies. The old maid was questioning Gasselin, trying to find out why he and his master were at Saint-Nazaire; Mademoiselle des Touches' carriage

aroused her suspicions. Before the young man could withdraw, Charlotte had caught sight of him.

"There's Calyste!" she cried.

"Go and offer them seats in my carriage; their maid can sit beside the coachman," said Camille, who knew that Madame de Kergarouët and her daughter and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had failed to obtain seats in the public conveyance.

Calyste, who had no choice but to obey, went to deliver his message. As soon as she realized that she was to travel with the Marquise de Rochefide and the celebrated Camille Maupin, Madame de Kergarouët refused to understand the significant pantomime of her elder sister, who was reluctant to avail herself of what she called the devil's carriage. At Nantes, civilization was a little more advanced than at Guérande; Camille Maupin was admired there; she was looked upon as the muse of Bretagne and an honor to the province; she was the object of as much curiosity as jealousy. The absolution accorded at Paris by society, by fashion, was confirmed by Mademoiselle des Touches' great fortune, and perhaps by her earlier triumphs at Nantes, which plumed itself upon having been the cradle of Camille Maupin. And so the viscountess, wild with curiosity, drew her aged sister along, without listening to her jeremiads.

"Good-morning, Calyste," said the little Kergarouët.

"Good-morning, Charlotte," Calyste replied, neglecting to offer her his arm.

Sadly embarrassed, she, by his cool greeting, he, by his own cruelty, they ascended together the ravine which is called a street at Saint-Nazaire, and silently followed the two sisters.

At that moment, the little maiden of sixteen saw the castle in Spain, built and furnished by her romantic hopes, crumbling away before her eyes. She and Calyste had played together so often in their childhood, she was on such intimate terms with him, that she believed her future to be unassailable. She was flying along, impelled by unreflecting joy, as a bird soars above a field of grain; suddenly her flight was checked, and she was utterly unable to imagine what had checked it.

"What's the matter, Calyste?" she asked, taking his hand.

"Nothing," replied the young man, disengaging his hand with unseemly haste, as he thought of his aunt's and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's projects.

Tears came to Charlotte's eyes. She looked at Calyste's handsome face without anger; but she was soon to experience her first thrill of jealousy and to feel the terrible frenzy of a rival, at the sight of the two lovely Parisians, and the resulting suspicion as to the cause of Calyste's coldness.

Charlotte de Kergarouët was of medium height and possessed a commonplace freshness of coloring, a small round face enlivened by two black eyes which played at understanding, abundant brown hair, a stout figure, flat back, thin arms, and the short, decided speech of provincial damsels who endeavor

to avoid having the appearance of little idiots. She was the spoiled child of the family because of her aunt's predilection for her. She was still wearing the Scotch plaid cloak, lined with green silk, which she had worn on the steamboat. Her traveling dress, of very ordinary material, made with a chaste wimple and embellished with a pleated *collerette*, would seem shocking in her eyes when she saw the fresh, airy costumes of Béatrix and Camille. She was doomed to suffer torments because she had on white stockings, soiled by leaping from the cliffs into the boat, and wretched kid boots, selected expressly to avoid spoiling anything nice in traveling, according to the usages and customs of provincials.

As for the Vicomtesse de Kergarouët, she was a perfect type of the provincial great lady. Tall, thin and withered, overflowing with hidden pretensions which never showed themselves until they had been wounded, a voluble talker and by dint of much talking, laying hold now and then of an idea or two, as one scores by a fluke at billiards, thereby gaining a reputation for wit; seeking to humiliate Parisians by the affected condescension of provincial virtue and by constantly putting forward a non-existent happiness, humbling herself to be raised up, and furious if she were left upon her knees; fishing for compliments with a line, as the English say, and not always catching them; overdressed and slovenly at the same time, taking a lack of affability for impertinence, and fancying that she embarrassed people beyond measure by paying little attention to

them; refusing what she longed for, so that it might be offered twice and that she might have the air of being urged beyond measure; engrossed with matters of which others had ceased to talk, and much amazed to find that she was not abreast of the times; lastly, finding it difficult to exist an hour without referring to Nantes, and the tigers of Nantes, and the affairs of the first society of Nantes, and complaining of Nantes and criticizing Nantes, and taking for personal affronts the remarks made in a spirit of complaisance by those who absent-mindedly fell in with her opinions. Her manners, her language, her ideas had infected her four daughters more or less.

To know Camille Maupin and Madame de Rochefide would furnish her with material for a hundred conversations and would be the making of her future! —so she strode on toward the church as if she proposed to carry it by assault; waving her handkerchief, which she unfolded in order to exhibit the corners, heavy with domestic embroidery and trimmed with wornout lace. She had a decidedly masculine gait, but in a woman of forty-seven that was of little consequence.

"Monsieur le Chevalier," she said to Camille and Béatrix, pointing to Calyste who was coming on behind, gloomily enough, with Charlotte—"Monsieur le Chevalier has informed us of your courteous invitation; but my sister and my daughter and myself fear that we shall incommode you."

"*I* certainly shall not incommode these ladies,"

said the old maid, sourly, "for I can surely find a horse in Saint-Nazaire to take me home."

Camille and Béatrix exchanged an oblique glance, detected by Calyste, and that glance was sufficient to destroy all his childish memories, his faith in the Kergarouët-Pen-Hoëls, and to shatter forever the plans formed by the two families.

"The carriage will easily hold five," said Mademoiselle des Touches upon whom Jacqueline had turned her back. "Even if we should be terribly crowded—which is quite impossible on account of your slender figures—I should be amply repaid by the pleasure of accommodating Calyste's friends. Your maid, madame, will find room on the box; and your luggage, if you have any, can go behind the carriage, as I brought no footman."

The viscountess overwhelmed her with thanks and scolded her sister Jacqueline for having insisted upon her niece's coming in such a hurry, that it was impossible for her to come in her own carriage by land; to be sure, the journey by post was not only long, but expensive; she must return at once to Nantes, where she had left three other little kittens impatiently waiting for her, she said, patting her daughter's neck. Charlotte thereupon assumed the air of a martyr, looking up into her mother's face in a way that implied that the viscountess drove her four daughters to despair by bringing them on the scene as often as Corporal Trim puts on his hat in *Tristram Shandy*.

"You are a fortunate mother, and you must—"

Camille interrupted herself, reflecting that the marchioness had been obliged to part from her son when she went with Conti.

"Oh! if I am so unfortunate as to pass my life in the country and at Nantes," rejoined the viscountess, "I have the consolation of knowing that my children adore me. Have you any children?" she asked Camille.

"I am Mademoiselle des Touches," she replied. "Madame is the Marquise de Rochefide."

"You are to be pitied then because you do not know the greatest happiness in the world to us poor, commonplace wives, is she not, madame?" said the viscountess to the marchioness, to repair her error. "But you have so many compensations!"

A hot tear came to Béatrix's eyes, and she turned abruptly and walked to the massive, rocky parapet, whither Calyste followed her.

"Madame," said Camille in the viscountess's ear, "aren't you aware that the marchioness lives apart from her husband, that she has not seen her son for two years, and has no idea when she will see him again?"

"Ah!" said Madame de Kergarouët, "poor woman! Is it a judicial separation?"

"No, incompatibility," said Camille.

"Indeed, I can understand that," said the viscountess, bravely.

Old Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, in despair at finding herself in the hostile camp, had intrenched herself a few steps away with her dear Charlotte.

Calyste, after looking about to see if anyone could see them, seized the marchioness's hand and kissed it, leaving a tear upon it. Béatrix turned, her own tears dried by indignation; she was about to hurl some withering phrase at him, but could summon no harsh words to her lips when she found her own tears reflected upon the angelic face of the young man, who was as deeply wounded as herself.

"*Mon Dieu,* Calyste," said Camille in his ear, as he returned with Madame de Rochefide, "you would have *her* for a mother-in-law, and that little goose for a wife!

"Because her aunt is rich," said Calyste, ironically.

The whole party started for the inn, and the viscountess felt called upon to favor Camille with a satire upon the savages of Saint-Nazaire.

"I love Bretagne, madame," replied Camille gravely; "I was born at Guérande."

Calyste could but admire Mademoiselle des Touches; her voice, her manner and her calm glance made him feel so entirely at ease, notwithstanding the astounding disclosures during the scene of the preceding night. She seemed a little fatigued, however: her features showed signs of sleeplessness, they seemed to have grown coarser, as it were, but the stern placidity of the brow dominated the tempest that raged within.

"What queenly creatures!" said Calyste to Charlotte, pointing to the marchioness and Camille, and

offering the young woman his arm, to Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's great satisfaction.

"What put it into your mother's head," said the old maid, also offering her niece her attenuated arm, "to force herself into that shameless woman's company?"

"Oh! aunt, a woman who is the glory of Bretagne!"

"The shame, little one. Do you propose to make up to her too?"

"Mademoiselle Charlotte is right, you are not fair," said Calyste.

"Oh!" retorted Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, "she has bewitched you."

"I have the same friendship for her as for you," said Calyste.

"Since when have the Du Guénics been liars?" said the old maid.

"Since the Pen-Hoëls became deaf," Calyste retorted.

"You aren't in love with her, are you?" queried the delighted old maid.

"I have been, but I am not now," he replied.

"Bad boy! why have you caused us so much anxiety? I know that love is all foolishness; there's nothing solid but marriage," she said, glancing at Charlotte.

Charlotte, somewhat consoled, hoped to be able to regain her advantage by laying stress upon all the incidents of their childhood, and she squeezed Calyste's arm, thereby causing him to make up his

mind to have a clear understanding with the little heiress.

"Ah! what fine games of *mouche* we will have, Calyste," she said, "and how we will laugh!"

The horses were harnessed, and Camille placed the viscountess and Charlotte on the back seat, for Jacqueline had disappeared; then she seated herself beside the marchioness on the front seat. Calyste, compelled to renounce the pleasure he had anticipated, rode beside the carriage, and the tired horses went so slowly that he was able to gaze at Béatrix to his heart's content.

History does not record the interesting conversation of the four persons whom chance had so singularly brought together in that carriage, for it is impossible to admit the accuracy of the hundred and one versions current at Nantes concerning the stories, the repartees, the bright sayings which the viscountess heard from the famous Camille Maupin's *own lips.* She was very careful not to repeat, or indeed to understand Mademoiselle des Touches' answers to the impertinent questions to which authors are so often compelled to listen, and which force them to pay cruelly for their infrequent pleasures.

"How did you write your books?" the viscountess asked.

"Why, as you do your woman's work, netting or tapestry," replied Camille.

"And where did you get such profound observations, such fascinating pictures?"

"Where you get the clever things you say, madame. There's nothing so easy as to write, and if you wished—"

"What! the whole thing consists in wishing? I wouldn't have believed it! Which one of your works do you prefer?"

"It is very difficult to have preferences among such trifles."

"You are surfeited with compliments, and one can think of nothing new to say to you."

"Believe, madame, that I am very grateful for the shape you give to yours."

The viscountess was anxious not to seem to slight the marchioness, and said, looking at her with a knowing expression:

"I shall never forget this drive between wit and beauty."

"You flatter me, madame," laughed the marchioness; "it is not natural to notice wit in the presence of genius, and I have said nothing of importance as yet."

Charlotte who was keenly conscious of the absurd figure cut by her mother, looked at her as if to stop her, but the viscountess continued to maintain a gallant struggle with the two laughing Parisians.

The young man, as he trotted beside the calèche at a slow, careless gait, could see only the two women who were sitting with their backs to the horses, and his eyes wandered from one to the other, betraying painful thoughts. Béatrix, although she was compelled to allow herself to be looked at,

persistently avoided the young man's gaze; by a manœuvre calculated to drive a lover to despair, she kept her shawl crossed under her clasped hands, and seemed absorbed in profound meditation. At a spot where the road is shady and cool and green, like a lovely forest path; where the sound of the wheels could scarcely be heard, where the leaves brushed against their hats, where the air was laden with balsamic odors, Camille called attention to the harmonious beauties of the landscape, and placed her hand upon Béatrix's knee, pointing to Calyste.

"How well he rides!" she said.

"Calyste?" said the viscountess. "He's a lovely horseman."

"Oh! Calyste is a very nice boy," said Charlotte.

"There are so many Englishmen like him!" rejoined the marchioness indolently, leaving her sentence unfinished.

"His mother is Irish, an O'Brien," said Charlotte, taking the remark as a personal attack upon herself.

Camille and the marchioness drove into Guérande with Vicomtesse de Kergarouët and her daughter, to the vast astonishment of the whole thunderstruck town; they set down their traveling companions at the entrance to the Du Guénic lane, where there was a concourse of people that lacked but little of being a crowd.

Calyste had ridden on before to advise his aunt and mother of the arrival of these unexpected guests

to dine with them. The meal was postponed by common consent until four o'clock. The chevalier returned to assist the two ladies to alight; then he kissed Camille's hand, hoping to be able to touch Madame de Rochefide's, but she sternly kept her arms folded, although he entreated her most earnestly with eyes that were wet with tears to no purpose.

"Little idiot," said Camille, touching his ear with a friendly kiss.

"That is true enough," said Calyste to himself, as the carriage was turning; "I forgot my mother's advice; but I fancy that I shall always forget it."

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Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël having made her appearance, bravely mounted on a hired horse, Vicomtesse de Kergarouët and Charlotte found the table laid and were welcomed with cordiality, if not with splendor, by the Du Guénics. Old Zéphirine had indicated the hiding place of certain choice wines, in the depths of the cellar, and Mariotte surpassed herself in the preparation of her Breton dishes.

The viscountess, enchanted to have made the journey with the illustrious Camille Maupin, tried to describe modern literature and Camille's place therein; but it was with the literary world as with whist: neither the Du Guénics, nor the curé who arrived in due course, nor the Chevalier du Halga, understood it in the least.

Abbé Grimont and the old sailor partook of the liqueurs served with the dessert. As soon as Mariotte, assisted by Gasselin and by the viscountess's maid, had removed the dishes, there was an enthusiastic demand for a game of *mouche*. Joy reigned in the household. All believed Calyste to be free from entanglement and fancied him already married to little Charlotte. Calyste said not a word. For the first time in his life, he was drawing comparisons between the Kergarouëts and the two fashionable, clever women, of refined tastes, who at that moment were probably making sport of the two

provincials, if one might judge from the first glance they had exchanged.

Fanny, who knew Calyste's secret, noticed her son's depression, and that Charlotte's cajoleries and the viscountess's attacks had little effect upon him. Evidently her dear boy was bored; his body was in that room, where in the old days he would have enjoyed the pleasantries of the *mouche*, but his mind was wandering away to Les Touches. "How can I send him to Camille?" the mother asked herself, for she sympathized with her son, who was in love and was bored at home. Her aroused affection made her unusually bright.

"You are dying to go to Les Touches to see *her*, aren't you?" she said in Calyste's ear.

The boy answered with a smile and a blush which penetrated to the lowest depths of that adorable mother's heart.

"Madame," said she to the viscountess, "you will be very uncomfortable in the carrier's wagon to-morrow, and you will be compelled to start very early too; wouldn't it be better for you to take Mademoiselle des Touches' carriage?—Go to Les Touches and make that arrangement, Calyste," she said, turning to her son; "but come back to us at once."

"It won't take me ten minutes," cried Calyste, and he wildly kissed his mother on the stoop, whither she followed him.

Calyste ran like a deer and was in the peristyle at Les Touches when Camille and Béatrix came out

of the large salon after dinner. He had sufficient presence of mind to offer his arm to Camille.

"You have deserted the viscountess and her daughter for us," said she, pressing his arm; "we are able now to realize the full extent of the sacrifice."

"Are these Kergarouëts connected with the Portenduères and old Admiral de Kergarouët, whose widow married Charles de Vandenesse?" Madame de Rochefide asked Camille.

"Mademoiselle Charlotte is the admiral's grandniece," was the reply.

"She's a charming girl," said Béatrix, posing in a gothic armchair; "Monsieur du Guénic is interested there, I fancy."

"The marriage will never take place," said Camille, quickly.

Crushed by the marchioness's cold, calm manner, as she indicated the little Breton girl as the only creature with whom he could cast in his lot, Calyste sat without voice or mind.

"Why so, Camille?" said Madame de Rochefide.

"My dear," replied Camille, noticing Calyste's despair, "I didn't advise Conti to marry and I thought I was delightful to him; you are not generous."

Béatrix gazed at her friend in amazement, mingled with indefinable suspicions. Calyste almost understood Camille's devotion when he saw upon her pale cheeks the faint flush that always denoted that her most violent emotions were

aroused; he walked awkwardly to where she sat, took her hand and kissed it. Camille sat carelessly down at the piano, as if she were sure of her friend and of the adorer whom she appropriated to herself, turning her back upon them and leaving them to all intents alone. She improvised variations upon themes selected by her mind without volition, for they were excessively melancholy. The marchioness seemed to be listening, but she had her eye upon Calyste, who, being too young and artless to play the part Camille assigned him, sat in a sort of ecstasy before his veritable idol. After an hour, during which Mademoiselle des Touches gave full vent to her jealousy in the most natural way, Béatrix retired. Camille at once ushered Calyste into her bedroom, in order not to be overheard, for women have a wonderfully accurate suspicious instinct.

"My child," said she, "make a pretence of being in love with me or you are lost. You are a mere boy, you know nothing whatever of women; you simply know how to love. To love and to win love for one's self are two very different things. You are doomed to suffer horribly and I long to see you happy. If you do not touch Béatrix's pride, but arouse her obstinacy, she is quite capable of taking flight to some place within a few miles of Paris, to be near Conti. What would become of you then?"

"I should still love her," Calyste replied.

"You will not see her again."

"Oh! yes," said he.

"How so?"

"I will follow her."

"But you are as poor as Job, my child!"

"My father and Gasselin and I lived three months in Vendée with a hundred and fifty francs, traveling day and night."

"Calyste," said Mademoiselle des Touches, "mark well what I say. I see that you have too much sincerity to pretend, I do not wish to corrupt such a lovely nature as yours, so I take everything upon myself. Béatrix shall love you."

"Is it possible?" said he, clasping his hands.

"Yes," Camille replied, "but we must overcome the engagements she has entered into with herself. I will therefore, tell lies for you.

"Do not you interfere in the very arduous task I propose to undertake. The marchioness possesses an aristocratic delicacy of perception, she is suspicious in an intelligent way; never did hunter fall in with game more difficult to catch; in this case, therefore, my poor boy, the hunter must listen to his dog. Do you promise to obey me blindly? I will be your Fox," she added, assuming the name of Calyste's favorite greyhound.

"What must I do?" the young man inquired.

"Very little," replied Camille. "You must come here every day, about noon. I will stand, like an impatient mistress, at the window in the corridor which overlooks the Guérande road, watching for your coming. I will run away into my bedroom in order not to be seen, and not to show you the extent

of a passion which is a burden to you; but you will see me once in a while and will wave your handkerchief to me. As you cross the courtyard and come up the stairs, you will act as if you were horribly bored. That will not require much dissimulation, my boy, will it?" she said, throwing her head forward on her bosom. "You will walk slowly, you will look through the hall window that opens on the garden, trying to see Béatrix. When she is there—and she shall walk there, never fear! —if she sees you, you will rush into the small salon and thence into my bedroom. If you see me at the window spying upon your treacherous behavior, you will hastily dart back, so that I may not surprise you begging for a look from Béatrix. Once in my bedroom, you will be my prisoner.—Ah! we will remain here together until four o'clock. You will employ the time in reading and I in smoking; you will be sadly depressed at not seeing her, but I will supply you with exciting books. You have read nothing of George Sand's; I will send one of my people to Nantes to-night to purchase her works and those of some other authors whom you do not know. I will go out of the room first and you will not put aside your book, you will not come into my little salon until you hear Béatrix talking with me. Whenever you see a book of music open on the piano, you can ask my permission to remain. I give you leave to be rude to me, if you can; all will go well."

"I know that your affection for me is most rare,

Camille, and it makes me regret having seen Béatrix," he said with charming frankness; "but what do you hope to accomplish?"

"In a week, Béatrix will be mad over you."

"*Mon Dieu!*" can it be possible?" he exclaimed, falling on his knees and clasping his hands at the feet of Camille, who was deeply moved though happy to bestow pleasure upon him at her own expense.

"Listen to me carefully," said she. "If you speak with the marchioness—I do not refer to a long conversation, but if you exchange only a few words with her—if you allow her to question you, if you depart from the silent rôle I assign to you, which is certainly a simple one to play, understand clearly," said she solemnly, "you will lose her forever."

"I do not at all understand what you say, Camille," cried Calyste, gazing into her face with adorable ingenuousness.

"If you did understand, you would not be the sublime child, the noble, beautiful Calyste that you are," she replied, taking his hand and kissing it.

Thereupon, Calyste did what he had never done before—he put his arm around Camille's waist and kissed her softly on the neck, without love, but with deep affection, as he was accustomed to kiss his mother. Mademoiselle des Touches could not restrain a torrent of tears.

"Go now, my child, and tell your viscountess that my carriage is at her service."

Calyste wanted to stay, but he was constrained to obey Camille's imperative and imperious gesture; he returned home in joyous mood, for he was sure of being beloved within the week by the fair Rochefide. The *mouche* players once more found in him the Calyste they had lost two months before. Charlotte assumed the credit for this transformation. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël was charmingly playful with Calyste. Abbé Grimont tried to read in the baroness's eyes the explanation of the tranquillity he saw therein. The Chevalier du Halga rubbed his hands. The two old maids were as vivacious as two lizards. The viscountess owed a hundred sous' worth of accumulated *mouches*. Zéphirine's cupidity was so keenly aroused that she regretted her inability to see the cards, and discharged a few sharp words at her sister-in-law, whose attention was diverted by Calyste's evident happiness and who questioned him from time to time, but was utterly unable to understand his replies.

The game lasted until eleven o'clock. There were two desertions; the baron and the chevalier fell asleep in their respective chairs. Mariotte had made some buckwheat cakes and the baroness went to fetch her tea-caddy. The illustrious house of Du Guénic, before the departure of the Kergarouëts and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, served a collation composed of fresh butter, fruits and cream, for which the silver teapot and the English porcelain sent to the baroness by one of her aunts were produced from

the chest. This simulacrum of modern splendor in that ancient hall and the exquisite grace of the baroness, who was brought up in the good old Irish fashion to make and serve tea which is so highly esteemed by Englishwomen, made a charming picture. The most unstinted luxury would not have produced the simple, modest and noble effect resulting from this sentiment of joyous hospitality. When the baroness and her son were left alone in the room, she looked at Calyste with an expression of curiosity.

"What happened at Les Touches to-night?" she inquired.

Calyste told her of the hope Camille had implanted in his heart and of her strange instructions.

"The poor woman!" cried the baroness, clasping her hands and sympathizing with Mademoiselle des Touches for the first time.

A few moments after Calyste's departure, Béatrix, who had heard him leave the house, returned to her friend, whom she found, with tears in her eyes, half reclining on a sofa.

"What is it, Félicité?" she asked.

"I am forty years old and I am in love, my dear!" said Mademoiselle des Touches in a horrifying tone of frenzied excitement, her eyes suddenly becoming dry and gleaming. "If you knew, Béatrix, how many tears I shed over the wasted days of my youth! To be loved from pity, to know that you owe your happiness only to painful struggles, to cat-like cunning, to snares laid to entrap the innocence and virtue of a child—is it not infamous?

Happily at such times you find absolution in the boundless extent of your passion, in the enthusiasm of happiness, in the certainty of being forever above all other women by engraving your image in a youthful heart by means of pleasures that cannot be effaced, by insensate devotion. Yes, if he should ask me to do it, I would throw myself into the sea at a signal from him. At times I surprise myself wishing that he would ask me to do it—it would be a votive offering, not a suicide.—Ah! Béatrix, you set me a hard task by coming here. I know how difficult it is to triumph over you; but you love Conti, you are noble and generous, and you will not deceive me; on the contrary, you will help me to retain my Calyste. I anticipated the impression you would make upon him, but I did not make the mistake of exhibiting my jealousy, for that would be to add fuel to the flame. On the contrary, I told him of your coming and described you in such vivid colors that you could never realize the expectations aroused by the portrait, but, to my undoing, you have grown more beautiful."

This vehement lament, wherein truth and deception were mingled, misled Madame de Rochefide completely. Claude Vignon had told Conti his reasons for leaving Les Touches, so that Béatrix was naturally informed concerning them and showed a generous spirit by her cold demeanor to Calyste; but, at that moment, she felt the thrill of joy that vibrates at the bottom of every woman's heart when she knows that she is beloved. The love she

inspires in a man means flattery without hypocrisy, and it is difficult not to enjoy it; but when that man belongs to her friend, his homage causes something more than joy, it causes celestial bliss. Béatrix sat down beside her friend and began to coax and cajole her.

"You haven't a single white hair," she said, "you haven't a wrinkle, your temples are still smooth, whereas I know more than one woman of thirty who is obliged to cover hers. Look, my dear," said she, raising her curls, "see what my journey has cost me!"

The marchioness pointed to the almost imperceptible traces of fatigue on her soft, fine-grained skin; she turned back her sleeves and exhibited similar traces on her wrists, where the transparent tissue, already roughened, showed the network of swollen veins, where three deep lines made a bracelet of wrinkles.

"Isn't it true, as a writer who is in the secret of our little wiles has said, that those are the two places that tell no lies?" said she. "One must have suffered cruelly to appreciate the truth of his brutal remark; but, luckily for us, most men know nothing about it, and don't read that infamous author."

"Your letter told me the whole story," Camille replied; "happiness knows nothing of conceit, and you boasted of your happiness too much to be really happy. In love, is not truth deaf and dumb and blind? And so, knowing that you have abundant

reason to leave Conti, I fear the results of your visit here. My dear, Calyste is an angel; he is as good as he is handsome, and the poor, innocent child will not offer the least resistance to a single glance from your eyes; he admires you too much not to love you upon the slightest encouragement; your disdain will preserve him to me. I confess, with the cowardice of true passion, that to take him from me would be to kill me. *Adolphe*, Benjamin Constant's ghastly book, describes Adolphe's sufferings, does it not, and not his wife's? Ah! he hasn't watched them closely enough to describe them; and what woman would dare describe them to him? they would dishonor our sex, they would degrade its virtues and exalt its vices. Ah! if I justly measure them by my fears, those sufferings must resemble the torments of hell. But in case he deserts me, my mind is made up."

"What have you decided to do?" queried Béatrix with an eagerness that made Camille shudder.

At that point the two friends gazed at each other with the intentness of two Venetian state inquisitors; their eyes met in a swift glance in which their hearts collided and struck fire like two flints. The marchioness looked down.

"After man, God alone remains," replied the celebrated author solemnly. "God is the unknown. I shall hurl myself into it as into an abyss. Calyste just gave me his word that he admires you only as one admires a picture; but, at twenty-eight, you are in all the splendor of your beauty. The struggle

between him and myself has begun with a lie therefore. Luckily, I know how to set to work to ensure my triumphs."

"What will you do?"

"That is my secret, my dear. Leave me whatever advantage my age gives me. If Claude Vignon has brutally cast me into an abyss—me, who had raised myself to a height I deemed inaccessible—I will, at all events, pluck all the pale flowers, drooping but sweet, that grow at the foot of precipices."

The marchioness was moulded like a piece of wax by Mademoiselle des Touches, who took a savage delight in enveloping her in her wiles. She dismissed her friend, devoured with curiosity, wavering between jealousy and generosity, but with her mind unquestionably filled with the comely Calyste.

"She will enjoy deceiving me beyond all things," said Camille to herself as they exchanged their good-night kiss.

But when she was alone, the authoress gave place to the woman; she burst into tears; she filled the bowl of her hookah with tobacco soaked in opium, and passed the greater part of the night in smoking, benumbing in this way the pangs of her love, and seeing Calyste's lovely head through the clouds of smoke.

"What a fine book I could write by telling the story of my sorrows!" she said to herself; "but the die is cast. Sappho lived before me, but Sappho was young. What a beautiful and touching heroine is a woman of forty years, in very truth! Smoke

your hookah, my poor Camille; you haven't even the resource of bewailing your woes in poetry; they are beyond words!"

She did not retire until just before dawn, interlarding with tears and bitter ejaculations and sublime resolutions, the long meditation, during which she thought at intervals of the mysteries of the Catholic religion, a subject to which, as heedless artist and sceptical writer, she had never given a thought in her whole life.

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The next day Calyste, whom his mother had advised to follow Camille's instructions to the letter, came at noon and ascended mysteriously to Camille's bedroom, where he found books awaiting him. Félicité remained in an easy-chair at the window, smoking, gazing by turns at the wild waste of marshes, at the sea, and at Calyste, with whom she exchanged a few words concerning Béatrix. At one time, seeing the marchioness walking in the garden, she unfastened the curtains, allowing her friend to catch sight of her as she did it, and drew them together to shut out the light, admitting only a single beam, which fell upon Calyste's book.

"To-day, my child, I will ask you to remain to dinner," she said, running her hands through his hair, "and you will refuse, but you will look at the marchioness and will have no difficulty in making her understand how much you regret your inability to remain."

About four o'clock Camille left the room, to play the atrocious comedy of her pretended bliss with the marchioness, whom she brought to her salon. Calyste thereupon came out of the bedroom; at that moment, he realized his degrading position. The glance which he bestowed upon Béatrix, and which

Félicité expected, was even more expressive than she anticipated.

Béatrix had made a fascinating toilet.

"How coquettishly you are dressed, my love!" said Camille, when Calyste had taken his leave.

This sort of thing went on for six days; it was accompanied, unknown to Calyste, by a series of most adroit conversations between Camille and her friend. There was a duel to the death in progress between the two women,—a duel in which they attacked each other with ruses, feints, false generosity, deceitful confessions, cunning confidences; in which one concealed and the other laid bare her love, and yet in which the keen steel, made red-hot by Camille's treacherous words, pierced her friend's heart and aroused there some of the evil impulses which virtuous women have such difficulty in restraining. Béatrix at last took offence at the distrust exhibited by Camille; she deemed it dishonorable to both; she was enchanted to discover that the eminent authoress was subject to the petty weaknesses of her sex, and she determined to have the pleasure of pointing out to her where her superiority ceased, and how she could be humiliated.

"Well, my dear, what are you going to say to him to-day?" she asked with a malicious glance at her friend when the pretended lover asked permission to remain. "Monday, we had something to talk about together; Tuesday, the dinner was not satisfactory; Wednesday, you didn't want to draw down the baroness's wrath on your head; Thursday,

you were going to walk with me; yesterday, you said adieu, as soon as he opened his mouth; to-day, I propose that he shall stay, poor boy."

"Already, my dear!" said Camille with stinging sarcasm.

The marchioness blushed.

"Remain, Monsieur du Guénic," said Mademoiselle des Touches to Calyste, assuming the air of a queen and an offended woman.

Béatrix became cold and stern; she was epigrammatic, crushing, and she abused poor Calyste, whom his pretended mistress sent away home at last to play *mouche* with Mademoiselle de Kergarouët.

"She is not dangerous, at all events!" said Béatrix with a smile.

Young people in love are like the starving; the cook's preparations do not satisfy them; they think too much of the result to understand the means. As he returned from Les Touches to Guérande, Calyste's mind was full of Béatrix and he had no thought for the profound feminine craft displayed by Félicité in forwarding his affair, to use the time-honored phrase.

During that week the marchioness had written but one letter to Conti, and that symptom of indifference was not lost upon Camille. Calyste's whole existence was concentrated in the brief space during which he was permitted to see the marchioness. That drop of water, far from quenching his thirst, made it doubly hard to endure. The magic

words: "She shall love you!" uttered by Camille and approved by his mother, were the talisman by whose aid he restrained the frenzy of his passion. He devoured the moments, he could not sleep, he cheated insomnia by reading, and every evening he brought home *cartloads* of books, according to Mariotte. His aunt cursed Mademoiselle des Touches; but the baroness, who had gone up to her son's room several times upon perceiving a light there, knew the secret of his vigils. Although she had never passed beyond the period of girlish timidity, and love was to her a sealed book, Fanny, through her maternal affection, acquired some conception of its meaning; but the major part of the depths of that sentiment was obscure and veiled by clouds, so that she was much alarmed by her son's plight, and by the single longing that was consuming him, and which she did not understand.

Calyste had but one thought; he seemed to have Béatrix always before his eyes. In the evening, during the inevitable game, his absent-mindedness resembled his father's fitful slumber. Finding him so different from what he was when he fancied himself in love with Camille, the baroness recognized with something like dismay, the symptoms that denoted genuine love, a sentiment altogether unknown in the old manor-house. Feverish irritability and constant self-absorption made Calyste dull and stupid. He would sit frequently for hours at a time staring at a figure in the hangings.

His mother had advised him that morning to

give up his visits to Les Touches, and to drop the two women.

"Not go to Les Touches any more!" cried Calyste.

"Go there if you will, don't be angry with me, my darling boy," she replied, kissing him upon the eyes which had shot fire at her.

At this juncture, Calyste was very near losing the fruit of all Camille's skilful manœuvring, because of the Breton fury of his passion, which he could no longer control. He swore to himself that he would see Béatrix alone and speak with her, despite his promises to Camille. He longed to read what her eyes might say, to drown his own glance therein, to scrutinize the most trifling details of her toilet, to breathe the perfume she exhaled, to listen to the music of her voice, to follow the fascinating grace of her movements, to embrace her whole figure at a single glance—in a word, to study her, as a great general studies the field on which a decisive battle is to be fought; he longed for her as lovers long; he was assailed by a desire which closed his ears, clouded his intelligence and cast him into a diseased mental condition in which he no longer recognized obstacles or distances; in which he no longer even felt his own body. He thereupon conceived the project of going to Les Touches before the hour agreed upon, hoping to meet Béatrix in the garden. He had learned that she was accustomed to walk there in the morning, while awaiting luncheon.

Mademoiselle des Touches and the marchioness had been that morning to inspect the salt marshes and the basin, bordered by fine sand, into which the sea flows and which resembles a lake amid the dunes; they had returned to the house and were talking together as they walked back and forth in the narrow sanded paths about the bowling-green.

"If this country interests you," said Camille, "you must go with Calyste and drive around Le Croisic. There are some fine cliffs there, cascades of granite, little bays with natural bath-tubs, and wonderfully curious formations; and then there is the sea with its innumerable fragments of marble—a world of entertainment. You will see women making *wood*,—that is to say, spreading cow-dung along the walls to dry it, and heaping it up as they do the peat in Paris; and in winter they keep themselves warm with that *wood*."

"So you will risk Calyste, will you?" said the marchioness, laughing, and in a tone which proved that Camille, the day before, by feigning ill-humor with her, had forced her to think much of Calyste.

"Ah! my dear, when you comprehend the angelic heart of such a child as he is, you will understand me. In him, mere beauty amounts to nothing; you must go to the bottom of that pure heart, of that artless innocence, amazed at every step it takes in the domain of love. Such faith! such candor! such charm! The ancients were right in worshiping divine beauty. Some traveler has told us that wild horses select the most beautiful of their number

for their leader. Beauty, my dear, is the genius of things; it is the mark nature places upon her most perfect creations, it is the truest of symbols, as it is the greatest of risks. Has anyone ever imagined a deformed angel? do they not always unite grace and strength? What makes us stand for hours at a time before certain pictures, in Italy, where genius has struggled for years and years to realize on canvas one of these ventures of nature? Come, tell me with your hand upon your conscience, do we not join ideal beauty with moral grandeur in our thoughts? Well, Calyste is one of those dreams fulfilled, he has the courage of the lion, who lives calmly on with no suspicion of his kingship. When he feels at ease he is bright and clever, and I love his girlish timidity. My mind finds rest in his heart from all the corruption, all base thoughts of science, literature, society, politics, and all the useless accessories with which we stifle happiness. I am now what I never was, a child! I am sure of him, but I love to play at jealousy, for it pleases him. Besides, that is part of my secret."

Béatrix walked on, pensive and silent; Camille was suffering indescribable martyrdom and darted sidelong glances at her that resembled tongues of flame.

"Ah! my dear, *you* are fortunate!" said Béatrix, resting her hand upon Camille's arm as if overdone by some secret resistance.

"Oh! yes, very fortunate!" poor Camille retorted with savage bitterness.

The two women dropped upon a bench, exhausted by their emotions. Never had any human being of her sex been subjected to more genuine seduction and more far-reaching machiavellianism than had Béatrix during the week just past.

"But I, I see Conti's infidelity and must swallow it!"

"Why don't you leave him, pray?" said Camille, seizing what she thought was a favorable moment to strike a decisive blow.

"Can I do it?"

"Oh! you poor child—"

They both gazed vacantly at a clump of trees.

"I am going to hurry luncheon," said Camille; "our excursion has given me an appetite."

"Our conversation has taken away mine," said Béatrix.

In her morning toilette, Béatrix stood out like a ghost against the green masses of foliage. Calyste, who had glided through the salon into the garden, walked slowly along one of the paths in order to meet the marchioness as if by chance; and Béatrix was unable to repress a slight start as she espied him.

"In what did I displease you yesterday, madame?" said Calyste, after they had exchanged some commonplace remarks.

"Why, you neither please nor displease me," she replied in a mild tone.

Her tone, her bearing, her exquisite grace gave him courage.

IN THE GARDEN AT LES TOOCHES

In her morning toilette, Béatrix stood out like a ghost against the green masses of foliage. Calyste, who had glided through the salon into the garden, walked slowly along one of the paths in order to meet the marchioness as if by chance; and Béatrix was unable to repress a slight start as she espied him.

"In what did I displease you yesterday, madame?" said Calyste.

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"I am entirely indifferent to you," he said in a trembling voice, and the tears gathered in his eyes.

"Should we not be indifferent to each other?" the marchioness rejoined. "We both have a genuine attachment—"

"Eh!" Calyste exclaimed hastily; "I did love Camille, but I no longer love her."

"In that case, what do you do every afternoon and all the afternoon?" said she with a cunning smile. "I do not imagine that, with all her fondness for tobacco, Camille prefers a cigar to you, or that you, despite your admiration for female authors, would pass four hours reading their novels."

"You know then?—" said the childlike Breton ingenuously, his face lighted up by the joy of gazing at his idol.

"Calyste!" cried Camille vehemently, suddenly appearing on the scene, cutting him short, seizing his arm and leading him a few steps away; "Calyste, is this what you promised me?"

The marchioness overheard the reproach uttered by Mademoiselle des Touches, who disappeared at once, scolding Calyste as she led him away; she was thunderstruck by Camille's declaration, which she could not understand. Madame de Rochefide was not so keen as Claude Vignon. The possibility of the terrible but sublime rôle undertaken by Camille is one of the infamous grandeurs which women admit only at the last extremity. Then their hearts break, then their womanly sentiments cease to

exist, then begins for them a self-abnegation which casts them into hell or lifts them up to heaven.

During luncheon, to which Calyste was invited, the marchioness, whose real sentiments were noble and exalted, retraced her steps, stifling the germs of love that were expanding in her heart. Her treatment of Calyste was not cold and harsh, but was stamped with an amiable indifference that drove him to despair. Félicité suggested an excursion for the next day but one, through the district included between Les Touches, Le Croisic and the village of Batz. She asked Calyste to devote the following day to procuring a boat and boatman, in case they should desire to travel part of the distance by sea. She undertook to furnish eatables, horses and everything essential to make their jaunt as little fatiguing as possible. Béatrix upset the project by declaring flatly that she would not expose herself to the risks of traveling about the country in that way.

Calyste's face, which had expressed the keenest delight, was at once covered with a veil.

"Pray, what are you afraid of, my dear?" said Camille.

"My position is too delicate for me to endanger, not my reputation, but my happiness," she said with emphasis, looking at the young Breton. "You know how jealous Conti is; if he should learn—"

"And who would tell him?"

"Isn't he coming back for me?" Those words drove the color from Calyste's cheeks. Despite Félicité's entreaties, re-enforced by Calyste's, Madame

de Rochefide was obdurate and exhibited what Camille called her obstinacy. Notwithstanding the hopes Félicité held out to him, Calyste left Les Touches a prey to one of those lovers' griefs, whose violence amounts to downright madness.

Having returned to the Du Guénic mansion, he did not leave his room until dinner-time, and returned to it again very soon after that repast was concluded. At ten o'clock his mother, much concerned, went up to see him and found him writing madly, surrounded by a vast heap of defaced and torn paper; he was writing to Béatrix, for he was suspicious of Camille; the marchioness's demeanor during their brief interview in the garden had encouraged him immensely.

Never, as may well be imagined, is a first love-letter a flood of burning lava from the heart. In the case of all young men whom corruption has not assailed, such a letter is accompanied by effervescence too abundant and too often repeated not to be the essence of several attempts, begun, cast aside, rewritten. This is the effusion upon which Calyste finally decided, and which he read to his poor astonished mother. To her mind, it was as if the old house were on fire, for her son's passion glowed like the reflection of a conflagration.

Calyste to Béatrix

"Madame, I loved you when you were only a dream to me—judge of the strength my passion has

acquired since I have seen you. The dream has been surpassed by the reality. It is my misfortune that I say nothing to you that you do not already know, when I tell you how lovely you are; but it may well be that your beauty has never aroused in any other person such a multitude of emotions as in me. You are beautiful in more ways than one; and I have studied you so closely, thinking of you day and night, that I have fathomed the mysteries of your person, the secrets of your heart and your misprized delicacy of sentiment. Have you ever been understood, adored, as you deserve to be? Pray believe that there is not one of your qualities that does not find an interpreter in my heart: your pride finds an echo in mine, the nobility of your glance, the grace of your carriage, the distinction of your every movement, everything about you is in harmony with the thoughts and aspirations hidden at the bottom of your heart, and it is by divining them that I have dared to deem myself worthy of you. If I had not become within a few days another yourself, should I speak to you of myself? To read my own heart would be pure egotism; in this matter you are much more concerned than Calyste. In order to write to you, Béatrix, I have imposed silence upon my twenty years, I have forgotten myself, I have matured my thoughts—or perhaps you have matured them by causing me, innocently, however, to pass a week of most horrible suffering. Do not deem me one of those commonplace lovers of whom you so justly make sport.

There is small credit in loving a young, beautiful, clever, noble woman! Alas! I do not even dream of deserving you. What am I to you? a child attracted by the splendor of beauty, by grandeur of mind, as an insect is attracted by the light. You cannot do otherwise than tread upon the flowers of my heart, but it will be my joy to see you trample them under your feet. Absolute devotion, boundless faith, insensate love, all these treasures of a true and loving heart are nothing; they assist one to love, but do not win love in return. At times, I cannot understand how such burning fanaticism can fail to inflame its idol; but when I meet your stern, cold eye, I feel an icy chill. It is your disdain that does effective work and not my adoration. Why? You cannot hate me as I love you, and should the weaker sentiment triumph over the stronger? I loved Félicité with all the strength of my heart; I forgot her in a day, in a moment, when I saw you. She was the illusion, you are the reality. You have unwittingly destroyed my happiness, and you owe me nothing in exchange. I loved Camille without hope, and you give me no hope; nothing is changed save the divinity. I was an idolater, now I am a Christian,—that's the whole story. But you have taught me that to love is the first of all forms of happiness, and that to be loved follows after. According to Camille, to love only for a few days is not to love at all: the love that does not increase from day to day is a paltry passion; in order to increase, its end must not be visible, and she saw the

impending setting of our sun. At sight of you, I understood the sayings that I had been combating with all the strength of my youth, with all the energy of my desires, with the despotic authority of my twenty years. Thereupon Camille, the great and sublime Camille, mingled her tears with mine. I am free, therefore, to love you on earth and in Heaven, as one loves God. If you loved me, you would not have at hand the arguments by which Camille crushed my efforts. We are both young, we can fly on the same wings, under the same sky, without fearing the tempest dreaded by that eagle. —But what am I saying? I have been carried far beyond my modest aspirations. You will cease to believe in the resignation, the patience, the dumb admiration which I implore you not to wound to no purpose. I know, Béatrix, that you cannot love me without forfeiting your self-esteem. Therefore, I ask for nothing in return. Camille said recently, apropos of her own name, that there is an innate fatality in names. That fatality I foresaw for myself in your name, when, as I stood upon the jetty at Guérande, it caught my eye on the brink of the Ocean. You will pass through my life as Beatrice passed through Dante's. My heart will serve as a pedestal to a pale, revengeful, jealous and unrelenting statue. You are forbidden to love me; you would suffer a thousand deaths, you would be betrayed, humiliated, miserable; there is in your heart the pride of a demon that binds you to the pillar you have embraced; you will perish there,

shaking the temple to its fall, as Samson did. I have not guessed all these things, for my love is too blind; but Camille told them to me. It is not my mind that is speaking to you now, but hers; I have no mind, as soon as I think of you, for the blood rushes from my heart in hot waves that darken my faculties, take away my strength, paralyze my tongue and force my knees to bend and give way beneath me. I can but adore you, whatever you may do. Camille calls your firmness obstinacy; but I defend you, for I believe it is dictated by virtue. You are only the lovelier for it in my eyes. I know my destiny: the pride of Bretagne rises to the level of the woman who has made a virtue of her pride. And so, dear Béatrix, be kind and comforting to me. When the victims were marked out for the sacrifice, they were crowned with flowers; you owe me the bouquet of pity, the music of sacrifice. Am I not the living witness of your grandeur, and will you not rise to the height of my love, which you reject with scorn, despite its sincerity, despite its everlasting intensity? Ask Camille how I behaved from the day she told me that she loved Claude Vignon. I said not a word, I suffered in silence. For you I will be even stronger if you do not drive me to despair, if you appreciate my heroism. A single word of praise from you would enable me to endure the agony of martyrdom. If you persist in this frigid silence, this deathly disdain, you will make me believe that I am to be feared. Ah! be to me what you really are, charming, gay,

bright, loving. Talk with me of Gennaro, as Camille talked with me of Claude. I have no genius save that of love, I have nothing that makes me formidable, and I will act in your presence as if I did not love you. Will you reject the prayer of a love so humble, of a poor child who asks no other favor than a ray of your light to lighten his path, a beam from your sun to warm him! The man you love will see you always; poor Calyste has but a few days before him; you will soon be rid of him. So I may come to Les Touches again to-morrow, may I not? you will not refuse my escort to visit the neighborhood of Le Croisic and the village of Batz? If you do not come, that will be a response and Calyste will understand it."

There were four more pages of fine, close writing, in which Calyste explained the terrible threat implied in the last words by describing his youth and his life; but he proceeded by exclamatory phrases; there were many of those exclamation points which are scattered broadcast by modern authors in dangerous passages, like planks held out to the reader's imagination to enable it to cross yawning chasms. To reproduce that artless narrative would be to repeat what has already been said; if it did not touch Madame de Rochefide, it would have but little interest for connoisseurs in violent emotions; but it made the mother weep.

"Then you have not been fortunate?" she said to her son.

This terrible poem of emotion, which was raging like a tempest in Calyste's heart, and was about to carry its ravages into another heart, terrified the baroness: it was the first time in her life she had ever read a love-letter.

Calyste was standing in terrible embarrassment; he had no idea how to forward his letter. The Chevalier du Halga was still in the great hall where the last hands of a lively game of *mouche* were in progress. Charlotte de Kergarouët, in despair at Calyste's indifference, was trying to make herself agreeable to his relatives in order to assure her marriage through their influence. Calyste followed his mother and appeared in the hall, with his letter in his pocket, burning his heart; he fluttered about and back and forth like a butterfly that has strayed into a house. At last, the mother and son drew the Chevalier du Halga into the dining-room, sending away Mariotte and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's small servant.

"What do they want of the chevalier?" said old Zéphirine to old Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"Calyste acts to me as if he were mad," was the reply. "He has no more consideration for Charlotte than if she were a *paludière*."

It had occurred to the baroness that the Chevalier du Halga had in all probability sailed in the waters of gallantry somewhere about the year 1780, and she had told Calyste to consult him.

"Which is the best way to send a letter secretly to one's mistress?" said Calyste in the chevalier's ear.

"Put it in her maid's hand, accompanied by a few louis; for a maid is sure to be in the secret sooner or later and it's better to let her in at the outset," said the chevalier, and a smile played about his lips; "but it's much better to deliver it in person."

"A few louis!" cried the baroness.

Calyste returned and took his hat; then he hurried away to Les Touches, and appeared like a ghost in the little salon, where he heard the voices of Camille and Béatrix. They were both sitting on the divan and seemed to understand each other perfectly.

Calyste, with the sudden accession of brilliancy that love sometimes imparts, threw himself recklessly upon the divan beside the marchioness, took her hand and slipped his letter into it, unseen by Félicité, close as her scrutiny was. Calyste's heart was tingling with keen but pleasurable emotion as he felt that his hand was pressed by Béatrix, who, without pausing in what she was saying, or exhibiting any sign of embarrassment, slipped the letter inside her glove.

"You throw yourself at women as you throw yourself upon divans," she said with a laugh.

"That isn't according to the theory of the Turks, by the way," retorted Félicité, unable to resist the temptation to make the epigram.

Calyste rose, took Félicité's hand and kissed it; then he went to the piano and ran his fingers over all the keys from one end to the other. This joyous outburst perplexed Camille, who beckoned him to her.

"What's the matter with you?" she whispered in his ear.

"Nothing," he replied.

"There is something between them," said Camille to herself.

The marchioness was impenetrable. Camille tried to make Calyste talk, hoping that he would betray himself; but the youth alleged his mother's anxiety as an excuse and left Les Touches at eleven o'clock, not until he had undergone the fire of a searching glance from Camille, who had never heard that pretext from his lips before.

After the agitation of a night full of dreams of Béatrix, after he had gone into the town twenty times during the morning to meet the reply that did not come, the marchioness's maid appeared at the Du Guénic mansion and handed Calyste the following letter, which he read beneath the arbor in the garden:

BÉATRIX TO CALYSTE

"You are a noble-hearted child, but a child you are. You owe yourself to Camille, who adores you. You will not find in me the eminent qualities that distinguish her nor the happiness she lavishes upon you. Whatever you may think, she is young and I am old, her heart is full of treasures and mine is empty, she is devoted to you to a degree that you do not appreciate as you ought, she is absolutely unselfish, she lives only in you; while I should be constantly oppressed with doubts, I should involve

you in a life of utter weariness, an ignoble life ruined by my own fault. Camille is free, she can go and come at will; I am a slave. Indeed, you forget that I love and that I am loved in return. My present position ought to protect me from homage of every sort. For a man to love me, or to tell me that he loves me, is an insult. Would not another misstep place me on the level of the vilest creatures of my sex? How can you, young and refined as you are, force me to tell you these things which do not issue from my heart without rending it? I preferred the scandal of an irreparable catastrophe to the shame of constant deception, my own ruin to the ruin of my probity; but, in the eyes of many persons whose esteem I value, I am still estimable; by changing again, I should fall several degrees lower. Society is still indulgent to those whose constancy covers with a cloak the illegitimacy of their happiness; but it is pitiless to continued vicious habits. I am neither disdainful nor angry; I answer you frankly and simply. You are young, you know nothing of the world, you are actuated by a mere fancy, and you are incapable, like all those whose lives are pure, of making the reflections that unhappiness inspires. I will go farther. Were I the most humiliated woman on earth, had I to conceal shocking misery, were I betrayed, were I deserted too,—thank God! nothing of all that can be, —but if by the vengeance of Heaven it should be, no one on earth would ever see me again. Yes, I should have the courage to kill a man who dared

speak to me of love under those circumstances, assuming that any man could find his way to me in my pitiable plight. There you have the burden of my thoughts. So, perhaps I ought to thank you for having written to me. After your letter, and especially after this reply, I can feel at my ease with you at Les Touches, I can act according to my nature and as you ask me to do. I say nothing of the bitter ridicule that would pursue me in case my eyes should cease to express the sentiments of which you complain. A second theft from Camille would be a proof of weakness to which a woman does not twice make up her mind. Even if I loved you madly, if I were blind, if I should forget everything else, I should always have Camille before my eyes. Her love for you is one of those barriers that are too high to be surmounted by any power, even by an angel's wings; there is but one devil that does not recoil from such infamous treachery as that. I could give you, my child, a multitude of reasons which noble-minded women of refined instincts keep to themselves and which men do not understand even when they are as like ourselves as you are at this moment. Lastly, you have a mother who has shown you the part a woman should play in life; she is pure and stainless, and has nobly fulfilled her destiny; what I know of her has brought tears to my eyes and I have felt envy stirring in my heart. I might have been like her! Calyste, your wife should be like her, her life like hers. I will not again mischievously commend you to that little

Charlotte, who would very soon weary you, but to some divinely beautiful maiden who is worthy of you. If I belonged to you, I should make your life a failure. Either you would lack faith and constancy or you would honestly entertain the purpose of devoting your whole existence to me: I tell you frankly that I should take it and drag you with me, where, I know not, far from the world; I should make you very miserable, for I am jealous, I see monsters in a drop of water, I am driven to despair by petty annoyances which other women pass by; there are certain inexorable thoughts too, which would come from myself, not from you, and would wound me to the death. When a man at the end of the tenth year of his good fortune is not so respectful and considerate as on the eve of the day he first implored a favor, he seems to me an infamous wretch and degrades me in my own eyes! such a lover no longer believes in the Amadis de Gauls and Cyruses of my dreams. To-day, pure love is a fable and I see in you naught but a fatuous desire, the end of which you do not see. I am not yet forty years old, I do not know how to force my pride to bend before the authority of experience, I have not the love that makes one humble, in short, I am a woman whose character is still too immature not to be despicable. I cannot answer for my own moods, and my charm is all on the outside. Perhaps I have not as yet suffered enough to have the indulgent manners and unquestioning affection which we owe to cruel disillusionment. Happiness has an impertinence of

its own and I am very impertinent. Camille will always be your devoted slave, and I should be an unreasonable tyrant. Moreover, was not Camille placed beside you by your good angel to enable you to reach unscathed, the moment when you will begin the life you are destined to lead, and in which you must not be found wanting? I know Félicité well! her affection is inexhaustible; she disregards the graces of our sex, perhaps, but she displays the creative force, the genius of constancy and the noble intrepidity which make everything else endurable. She will find a wife for you although it will cost her a most horrible pang; she will find a Béatrix for you who is free, if Béatrix fulfils your ideal woman and your dreams; she will smooth away all the difficulties that beset your future. The sale of an acre of land she owns in Paris will release your Bretagne estates and she will make you her heir; has she not already made you her son by adoption? Alas! what can I do to make you happy? Nothing. Do not therefore betray an infinite love which stops only at the obligations of maternity. I consider this Camille of yours very fortunate, do you know! —The admiration poor Béatrix inspires in you is one of the peccadilloes to which women of Camille's age are indulgent to the last degree. When they are sure of being beloved, they forgive their faithful lover an occasional infidelity; indeed, it is one of the keenest pleasures they know to triumph over more youthful rivals. Camille is far above other women; this is not meant for her ear, and I say it

only to set your conscience at rest. I have studied Camille carefully; she is, in my opinion, one of the grandest figures of our time. She is clever and kindly, two qualities which are almost irreconcilable in women; she is generous and simple-minded, two other forms of grandeur which are rarely found in the same person. I have discovered unfailing treasures in the depths of her heart; it seems as if Dante must have had her in mind when he wrote the beautiful strophe in his *Paradiso* concerning everlasting happiness, which she explained to you the other night—the passsage that ends with *Senza brama sicura richezza.* She has talked to me about her destiny, she has told me the story of her life, proving to me that love, the object of our longings and our dreams, has always avoided her, and I replied that she seemed to me to be a living demonstration of the difficulty of duplicating sublime things which lies at the root of much misery. Yours is one of those angelic hearts, whose sister it seems hopeless to think of meeting. From that calamity, my dear child, Camille will save you; she will find for you, though it kill her, a creature with whom you can live happily.

"I extend to you a friendly hand and rely, not upon your heart, but upon your good sense to make it possible for us to be like brother and sister to each other, and to let our correspondence end here; for to write from Guérande to Les Touches is, to say the least, peculiar.

"BÉATRIX DE CASTERAN."

Moved to the last degree by the details and the progress of her son's affair with the lovely Marquise de Rochefide, the baroness could not remain in the hall where she was sitting at her work, with one eye constantly upon Calyste; she left her chair and went to him in the arbor with an air that was at once humble and bold. At that moment, the mother had the fascinating grace of a courtesan seeking to obtain a concession.

"Well?" she said, in a trembling voice, but without actually asking to see the letter.

Calyste showed her the letter and read it to her. Those two pure hearts were so simple and unsuspecting that they detected in that astute and perfidious effusion, none of the wiles and none of the snares with which the marchioness had interlarded it.

"She is a great and noble woman!" said the baroness, whose eyes were moist. "I will pray for her. I did not believe that a mother could desert her husband, her child, and retain so much virtue! She is worthy of forgiveness."

"Am I not justified in adoring her?" said Calyste.

"But where will this love lead you?" cried the baroness. "Ah! my child, how many women endowed with noble sentiments are dangerous! The evil-minded ones are less to be feared. Marry Charlotte de Kergarouët, redeem two-thirds of your family estates. By selling a farm or two Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël will effect that great result, and the good creature will make it her care to invest

your property to good advantage. You can leave your children an honorable name and a handsome fortune—"

"Forget Béatrix?" said Calyste in a hollow voice, his eyes fixed on the ground.

He left the baroness and went up to his own room to reply to Béatrix.

Madame du Guénic had the letter engraved on her heart; she was determined to know what to expect as to Calyste's prospects. About that hour of the day, the Chevalier du Halga always took his dog out for a walk on the mall; the baroness, sure of finding him there, put on her hat and shawl and went out. To see the Baronne du Guénic elsewhere than at church, or in one of the two pretty little paths set aside for promenaders on holidays, when she was accompanied by her husband and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, was such a noteworthy event, that within two hours every person in the town accosted his neighbor with:

"Madame du Guénic went out to-day; did you see her?"

So it was that the news soon reached the ears of Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, who said to her niece:

"Something most extraordinary is going on at the Du Guénics'."

"Calyste is madly in love with the beautiful Marquise de Rochefide," said Charlotte; "I must leave Guérande and return to Nantes."

The Chevalier du Halga, surprised to find the baroness in quest of him, let go Thisbé's leash,

realizing the impossibility of dividing his attentions.

"Chevalier, you have been a lady's man, have you not?" said the baroness.

Captain du Halga drew himself up with a decidedly dandified air. Madame du Guénic, without saying a word of her son or of the marchioness, gave him the substance of the letter, and inquired his opinion as to its probable meaning. The chevalier elevated his nose and caressed his chin; he listened, making little grimaces from time to time; at last he looked the baroness in the face with a knowing expression.

"When a thoroughbred horse has a fence to leap he reconnoitres it and smells at it," he said; "Calyste is the luckiest dog in the world."

"Hush!" said the baroness.

"I am dumb. In the old days I had no advantage but that," said the old chevalier. "It's a fine day," he continued after a pause, "the wind is north-east. *Tudieu!* how the *Belle-Poule* hugged the wind the day the—But," he said, interrupting himself, "my ears are ringing, and I feel pains in my ribs; the weather will soon change. The *Belle-Poule's* fight made such a noise, you know, that the ladies wore caps *à la Belle-Poule*. Madame de Kergarouët was the first to go to the Opéra in one. 'Madame, your head is arrayed for conquest,' I said to her, and the remark went the round of the boxes."

The baroness listened good-naturedly to the old man, who, faithful to the laws of gallantry, escorted

her as far as the Du Guénic lane, neglecting Thisbé altogether. On the way the chevalier divulged the secret of Thisbé's birth. Thisbé was the granddaughter of the priceless Thisbé, belonging to Madame l'Amirale de Kergarouët, the Comte de Kergarouët's first wife. This last Thisbé was eighteen years old.

The baroness went rapidly upstairs to Calyste's room, as light of heart as if she were in love on her own account. Calyste was not in the room, but Fanny spied a letter addressed to Madame de Rochefide lying on the table, folded but not sealed. Ungovernable curiosity impelled the anxious mother to read her son's reply. Her indiscretion was cruelly punished. She felt a horrible pain at her heart as she caught a glimpse of the precipice over whose edge Calyste was being pushed by his love.

CALYSTE TO BÉATRIX

"Ah! what care I for the blood of the Du Guénics in these days, dear Béatrix! My name is Béatrix; Béatrix's happiness is my happiness, her life my life, and my whole fortune is in her heart. Our estates have been in pawn for two centuries, they can remain in pawn for two more centuries; our farmers will keep them and no one can carry them off. To see you and love you—that is my religion! I, marry! the idea of it has thrown my heart into a turmoil. Are there two Béatrix's? I will never

marry anyone but you, I will wait twenty years if I must; I am young and you will always be beautiful. My mother is a saint, I cannot pass judgment upon her. She never was in love! I know now how much she has lost and what sacrifices she has made. You have taught me, Béatrix, to love my mother more dearly; she is beside you in my heart, and no one else will ever find a place there; she is your only rival; is that not equivalent to saying that your reign there will be undisputed? Thus your arguments have no effect upon my mind. As for Camille, you have but to give me the signal and I will beg her to tell you with her own lips that I do not love her; she is the mother of my intelligence, nothing more or less. As soon as I first saw you, she became my sister, my friend, male or female, whichever you choose; but we have no other claim upon each other than that which friendship gives. I took her for a woman until I saw you. But you have proved to me that Camille is a boy; she smokes, she drinks, she swims, she hunts, she rides, she analyzes a heart and a book, she hasn't the slightest weakness, she marches forward in her might; she has neither your grace of movement, nor your gait, smooth as the flight of a bird, nor your loving voice, nor your soft glances, nor your graceful carriage; she is Camille Maupin and nothing else; she has nothing of the woman about her and you have everything that I love; it has seemed to me from the day I first saw you as if you were mine! You will laugh at the feeling, but it has not

ceased to grow stronger, and it would seem to me to be a monstrous thing that we should be separated: you are my heart, my life, and I could not live where you were not. Allow yourself to love me! We will fly, we will go away, far from the world, to some country where you will meet no one, and where you will have only God and myself in your heart. My mother, who loves you, will come some day to live with us. There are castles in Ireland and my mother's family will lend us one to live in. *Mon Dieu!* let us go! A boat and boatmen, and we shall be there before anyone knows whither we have fled to avoid the society you dread so keenly! You have never been really loved; I feel sure of it as I read your letter again, and I think I can read between the lines that, if none of the arguments you put forward existed, you would allow me to love you. Béatrix, a sacred passion wipes out the past. Can one think of anything but you when you are before one's eyes? Ah! I love you so dearly that I would prefer a thousand times over that you should be an infamous creature in order to show you the power of my love by adoring you as the most saintly of women. You call my love an insult to you. O Béatrix, you cannot think it! the love of a noble youth—did you not call me that?—would do honor to a queen. And so, to-morrow, we will go as lovers along the cliffs and the sea, and you will walk upon the sands of old Bretagne in order to consecrate them anew for me! Give me this one day of happiness; and the fleeting boon,—which will

perhaps find no place in your memory, alas!—will be a never-ending source of joy to Calyste—"

The baroness let the letter fall without finishing it; she knelt upon a chair and prayed silently to God, imploring him to preserve her son's understanding, to protect him from all folly and error, and to turn him aside from the path upon which he had embarked.

"What are you doing, mother?" said Calyste.

"I am praying for you," said she, raising her tearful eyes to his face. "I have just been guilty of reading that letter. My Calyste is mad!"

"With the sweetest of all forms of madness," said the youth, as he kissed his mother.

"I would like to see this woman, my child."

"Very well, mamma," said Calyste, "we shall take the boat for Le Croisic to-morrow; be on the jetty."

He sealed his letter and started for Les Touches. The thing that alarmed the baroness more than all else, was to see that in him passion was endowed by instinct with the second sight of consummate experience. Calyste had written to Béatrix as if the Chevalier du Halga had been at his elbow.

*

One of the keenest pleasures ever enjoyed by small minds or by inferior beings is that of deceiving great minds and catching them in some trap. Béatrix knew that she was far inferior to Camille Maupin. The inferiority existed not only in the assemblage of mental qualities called *talent*, but in matters of the heart which are collectively called *passion*.

When Calyste appeared at Les Touches with the impetuosity of a first love borne upon the wings of hope, the marchioness was conscious of a feeling of keen delight, due to the knowledge that she was loved by that adorable youth. She did not go so far as to make up her mind to give comfort and encouragement to the feeling; she would exert her heroism in restraining this *capriccio*, as the Italians say, considering that she thereby placed herself upon her friend's level; she was happy in being able to make a sacrifice to her. In a word, the petty vanities characteristic of French women, which go to make up the famous coquetry to which they owe their superiority, were flattered and fully satisfied in her; although exposed to great temptation, she resisted, and her virtues sang a sweet chorus of laudation in her ears. The two women, apparently indolent in the extreme, were half reclining upon the divan in the small salon, where

everything was in such perfect harmony, in the midst of a world of flowers and with open windows, —for the north wind had ceased to blow. A soft breeze from the south ruffled the surface of the salt lake which could be seen from the windows, and the sand glistened like gold in the sunlight. Their hearts were as agitated as nature was tranquil, and were no less ardent.

Crushed by the wheels of the machinery she had set in motion, Camille was compelled to keep a close watch upon herself because of the prodigious craft of the friendly foe she had taken into her cage; but, in order not to betray her secret, she abandoned herself to rapt contemplation of the landscape; she beguiled her suffering by trying to fathom the meaning of the movement of the worlds, and found God in the sublime desert of the heavens. When God is once recognized by the sceptic he plunges into absolute Catholicism, which, viewed as a system, is without a flaw.

In the morning, Camille had appeared before the marchioness with her brow bathed in the beams shed by her investigations during a night passed in lamentation. Calyste was always before her eyes like a celestial image. She looked upon the comely youth, to whom she had devoted her life, as her guardian angel. Was it not he who guided her to the lofty regions where suffering ceases beneath the weight of incomprehensible immensity? And yet Béatrix's triumphant air disturbed Camille. One woman does not gain such an advantage over another

without allowing it to be guessed, although she denies having taken it. Nothing more extraordinary can be imagined than the fierce moral contest between these two friends, each of whom was concealing a secret from the other and believed the other to be her debtor for unheard-of sacrifices.

Calyste arrived with his letter between his hand and his glove, ready to slip it into Béatrix's hand. Camille, who had not failed to observe her friend's change of manner, seemed not to be looking at her when Calyste entered the room, but was, in fact, looking at her in a mirror. Such a moment is a hazardous period for all women. The cleverest as well as the most foolish, the most candid as well as the most astute, ceases to be mistress of her secret; at such a moment, it is laid bare before the eyes of another woman. Too great reserve or too little reserve, a frank, luminous glance or a mysterious lowering of the eyelids,—everything at such a time betrays the feeling that is most difficult to conceal; for there is an air of unmistakable coldness about real indifference which can never be simulated. Women have a genius for shades of manner; they resort to them too often not to be familiar with them all; and on such occasions their eyes embrace a rival from head to foot; they detect the slightest movement of a foot beneath the dress, the slightest quiver of the frame, and know the deep significance of all that which to a man seems insignificant. Two women spying upon each other will play one of the most admirable comedy scenes that can be imagined.

"Calyste has done some idiotic thing or other," thought Camille, observing in each of them the indefinable manner of persons who understand each other.

There was no further stiffness or feigned indifference about the marchioness; she looked at Calyste as at something belonging to herself. The result was that Calyste's manner was most expressive; he blushed like a real culprit, like a happy man. He came to make final arrangements for the following day.

"So you are really going with us, my dear?" said Camille.

"Yes," Béatrix replied.

"How did you know it?" Mademoiselle des Touches asked Calyste.

"I came to find out," he answered, in obedience to a significant glance from Madame de Rochefide, who did not choose that her friend should have the least suspicion of their correspondence.

"They have an understanding already," said Camille to herself, when she saw that glance out of the corner of her eye. "It's all over, and there is nothing left for me to do but disappear."

That thought was so crushing to her that her features betrayed a discomposure which made Béatrix shudder.

"What is it, my dear?" said she.

"Nothing.—Then you must send my horses and yours on ahead, Calyste, so that we may find them beyond Le Croisic and ride home by way of Batz.

We will take luncheon at Le Croisic and dine at Les Touches. You must engage the boatmen. We will start at half-past eight.—What pleasure you have in store!" she said to Béatrix. "You will see Cambremer, a man who does penance on a rock for the wilful murder of his son. Oh! this is a primitive land, where men are not governed by the ordinary sentiments of mankind. Calyste will tell you that story."

She went into her bedroom, for she was suffocating. Calyste delivered his letter, then followed Camille.

"She loves you, I think, Calyste, but you are concealing some escapade from me, and you have certainly disobeyed my orders, haven't you?"

"She loves me!" he exclaimed, falling upon a chair.

Camille put her head into the salon; Béatrix had disappeared. That fact in itself was strange. A woman does not leave a room that contains the man she loves, when she is certain of seeing him again, unless she has something better to do.

"Can she have a letter from Calyste?" Mademoiselle des Touches asked herself.

But she believed the guileless Breton to be incapable of such a bold step.

"If you have disobeyed me, all will be lost by your own fault," she said gravely. "Go and prepare for your bliss to-morrow."

She made a gesture and Calyste did not resist; there are mute sorrows that possess despotic eloquence.

As he crossed the sand and the marshes on his way to Le Croisic to engage the boatmen, he was assailed by doubts. There was an ominous ring to Camille's words, which betrayed the second sight of maternity. When he returned four hours later, quite exhausted, expecting to dine at Les Touches, he found Camille's maid doing sentry duty at the gate, waiting to tell him that her mistress and the marchioness could not receive him that evening. When Calyste, taken aback, attempted to question the maid, she closed the gate and fled.

Six o'clock was striking on the town clock of Guérande. Calyste returned home, ordered up the remains of the dinner, and played *mouche* in gloomy meditation. These alternatives of happiness and despair, the crushing of his hopes following close upon the certainty that he was loved, rent the youthful heart, which had soared so high in its flight toward heaven that the fall was sure to be crushing.

"What is troubling you, dear Calyste?" his mother whispered in his ear.

"Nothing," he replied, looking into her face with eyes from which the light of the soul and the fire of love had departed.

Despair, not hope, gives the measure of our ambition. We gloat in secret over the beautiful poems of hope, whereas sorrow shows itself without a veil.

"Calyste, you are not polite," said Charlotte, after vainly trying upon him all the little provincial cajoleries which always degenerate into sulkiness.

"I am tired," he said, rising and bidding the company good-night.

"Calyste is sadly changed," said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"We have no lovely dresses trimmed with lace, we don't flutter our sleeves this way, we don't strike attitudes like this, we haven't the trick of looking sidewise and turning our heads," said Charlotte, imitating and exaggerating the marchioness's manner and pose and expression. "We haven't a voice that comes from the head, nor that fascinating little cough, *ahem! ahem!* that sounds like a ghost's sigh; we are unfortunate enough to enjoy robust health and to love our friends without coquetry; when we look at them we don't seem to be pricking them with a dart or examining them with hypocritical eyes. We don't know how to bend our heads over like a weeping willow and affect affability by raising them again this way!"

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël could not restrain a smile at her niece's gestures; but neither the baron nor the chevalier understood this provincial satire upon Paris.

"The Marquise de Rochefide is very beautiful, however," said the old maid.

"My dear, I know that she is going to Le Croisic to-morrow," the baroness said to her husband; "we will walk in that direction, for I am very anxious to meet her."

While Calyste was cudgeling his brains to guess what it could be that had closed the doors of Les

Touches to him, a scene took place between the two friends which was destined to have a marked influence upon the events of the morrow.

Calyste's letter had aroused unfamiliar emotions in Madame de Rochefide's heart. Every woman is not the object of so fresh, so artless, so sincere and so absolute a passion as that child's. Béatrix had, in the past, given more love than she had received. After having been a slave, she felt an inexplicable longing to play the tyrant. Amid her delight, as she read and reread Calyste's letter, she felt the sting of a cruel thought. What had Calyste and Camille been doing together since Claude Vignon's departure? If Calyste did not love Camille and Camille knew it, how, then, did they employ their afternoons? Memory mischievously placed Camille's harangues side by side with that query in her mind. It seemed to her as if a mocking devil suddenly displayed in a magic mirror the portrait of that heroic creature with certain gestures and certain glances that completed Béatrix's enlightenment. Instead of being on a level with Camille, she was crushed by her; instead of outwitting her, she was outwitted by her; she herself was simply a toy that Camille wished to give her child, whom she loved with an extraordinary, unselfish love.

To a woman like Béatrix, such a discovery was a thunderbolt. She reviewed minutely the events of the past week. In a moment, the rôles played by Camille and by herself were unfolded before her in their full meaning; she felt strangely humiliated.

In her paroxysm of jealous anger against Camille, she fancied that she could detect a purpose on her part to be revenged upon Conti. Perhaps the memory of the past two years had its effect upon those last two weeks.

Once fairly launched upon the downward slope of suspicion, conjecture and indignation, Béatrix did not stop half way; she paced up and down her room, assailed by violent impulses, sitting down at intervals and trying to determine what course to pursue; but the dinner hour arrived and found her still undecided, and she took her place at the table without changing her dress.

When her rival entered the room, Camille instantly divined all that had taken place. Not only was Béatrix not dressed for dinner but her face wore a cold, reserved expression which, to so perspicacious an observer as Camille, denoted the hostility of an embittered heart. Camille at once left the room and gave the order which was to cause Calyste such astonishment; she thought that, if the ingenuous Breton should appear with his insensate love in the midst of the quarrel, he would be very likely to compromise the future of his passion by some idiotic outburst, so that he would never see Béatrix again; she desired that the impending duel of dissimulation should be fought without witnesses. Béatrix without auxiliaries was sure to be at her mercy. Camille knew the selfishness of her heart, the pettiness of that mighty pride to which she had so justly applied the name of obstinacy.

The dinner was a gloomy affair. Each of the two women had too much good sense and good taste to bandy words before the servants or to have them listening at the doors. Camille's manner was gentle and kindly, she was so sure of her superiority! The marchioness was hard and satirical, for she knew that she was being played with like a child. Throughout the dinner they fought a battle of glances, gestures and veiled phrases which conveyed no idea to the servants, but which told that a fierce storm was brewing. When it was time to return upstairs, Camille maliciously offered her arm to Béatrix, who pretended not to see her friend's gesture and hurried out alone into the hall. When the coffee was served, Mademoiselle des Touches dismissed her footman, thereby giving the signal for battle.

"The romances you act, my dear, are a little more dangerous than those you write," said the marchioness.

"They have one great advantage, however," said Camille, lighting a cigarette.

"What is that?" queried Béatrix.

"They are unpublished, my angel."

"Will you publish the one into which you have introduced me?"

"I have no calling for the trade of Œdipus; you have the wit and beauty of the Sphinx, I know; but don't propound riddles to me, speak plainly, my dear Béatrix."

"When we ask a devil to assist us to make men

happy, to entertain them, to make ourselves agreeable to them and while away their ennui—"

"The men later reproach us with our efforts and struggles, fancying that they are inspired by the genius of depravity," interrupted Camille, laying aside her cigarette.

"They forget the love that carried us beyond ourselves and justified our excesses; for to what point do we not go! But they are only acting their part as men, they are ungrateful and unfair," continued Béatrix. "Women understand each other; they know how proud and noble and, let us say the word, how virtuous their attitude is under all circumstances. But, Camille, I have come to realize the truth of the criticisms of which you have sometimes complained. Yes, my dear, you have something of the man about you, you act like them, you stop at nothing, and, even if you haven't all their advantages, you have their habits of thought, and you share their contempt for your own sex. I have no reason to be pleased with you, my dear, and I am too outspoken to conceal it. No one else, perhaps, could inflict so deep a wound upon my heart as that from which I am now suffering. If you are not a woman where love is concerned, you become one again in the matter of revenge. It requires a woman of genius to search out the most sensitive point in our weak natures; I am speaking, my dear, of Calyste and the *trickery*—that is the proper word—you have employed against me. How low have you descended, Camille Maupin, and with what purpose?"

"Still more and more sphinx-like!" said Camille, with a smile.

"You wanted me to throw myself at Calyste's head; I am still too young to act in any such way. To me love is love with its fiendish jealousy and its tyrannical will. I am not an authoress: it is impossible for me to detect ideas in sentiments—"

"You fancy yourself capable of loving madly, do you?" queried Camille. "Don't be alarmed, you still have a fair share of intelligence. You slander yourself, my dear: you are sufficiently cold-blooded always to make your head the judge of the lofty deeds of your heart."

This epigrammatic remark made the marchioness blush; she darted at Camille a glance overflowing with hatred—a venomous glance—and laid her hand, without an effort, upon the most deadly arrows in her quiver. Camille, smoking cigarettes all the while, listened coolly to the furious tirade, which bristled with such stinging insults that it is impossible to quote it. Enraged by her adversary's calmness, Béatrix indulged in shocking personalities apropos of Mademoiselle des Touches' age.

"Is that all?" queried the latter, emitting a cloud of smoke. "Do you love Calyste?"

"Indeed I do not."

"So much the better," retorted Camille. "For my part, I do love him, far too much for my own peace of mind. Perhaps he may have a passing fancy for you, for you are the most delicious blonde in the world, and I am as black as a mole; you are

slender and willowy, and I have too much dignity in my figure; lastly, you are young! that is the vital point; and you have had no mercy on me. You have made an unfair use of your womanly advantages against me, just exactly as a paltry newspaper abuses the privilege of ridicule. I have done all I could do to prevent what is happening now," she said, looking at the ceiling. "However little womanliness I may possess, I am still enough of a woman, my dear, to make my own assistance necessary to a rival to enable her to triumph over me."—The marchioness was cut to the heart by this savage thrust, uttered in the most innocent way. —"You take me for a perfect fool of a woman because you believe what Calyste chooses to make you believe. I am neither so great nor so small; I am a woman and very much a woman. Put aside your high and mighty airs and give me your hand," continued Camille, seizing Béatrix's hand. "You are not in love with Calyste—that is the truth, isn't it? In that case, don't lose your head! be stern and cold and harsh to him to-morrow; he will end by submitting, after the quarrel I propose to have with him, and especially after the reconciliation, for I haven't exhausted the resources of our arsenal, and, after all, pleasure always gets the better of desire. But Calyste is a Breton. If he persists in paying court to you, just tell me so frankly, and you shall go from here to a little country house of mine within six leagues of Paris, where you will find all the conveniences of life, and where Conti can visit you.

As to Calyste's slandering me, why, bless my soul! the purest love lies six times a day, and its impostures demonstrate its strength."

There was upon Camille's face an expression of superb indifference which made the marchioness anxious and fearful. She knew not how to reply.

Camille thereupon dealt the final blow.

"I am more trustful and better-tempered than you," she continued; "I do not credit you with the purpose to cloak by recrimination an attack which would endanger my life: you know me; I shall not survive the loss of Calyste, and I must lose him sooner or later. Calyste loves me, however, I know that."

"Here is his reply to a letter in which I talked of you and nothing else," said Béatrix, handing her Calyste's letter.

Camille took it and read it; but, as she read, her eyes filled with tears; she wept as all women weep in their bitter grief.

"*Mon Dieu!*" she murmured, "he loves her. So I must die without ever being understood or loved!"

She sat for some moments with her head resting upon Béatrix's shoulder: her grief was genuine; she felt to the inmost recesses of her being the terrible blow that the Baronne du Guénic had received upon reading that letter.

"Do you love him?" she suddenly demanded, sitting erect and looking Béatrix in the face. "Have you for him the boundless adoration that triumphs over all sorrows and survives contempt,

treachery and the certainty of never possessing his love again? Do you love him for himself and for the mere pleasure of loving him?"

"Dear friend!" said the marchioness, deeply moved. "You may set your mind at rest, I will go away to-morrow."

"Do not go away, for he really loves you, I can see that! And I love him so dearly that it would drive me to despair to see him unhappy and suffering. I had formed many plans for him; but, if he loves you, it is all over."

"I do love him, Camille," said the marchioness thereupon, with adorable ingenuousness, but blushing as she said it.

"You love him and you can resist him?" cried Camille. "Ah! you don't love him!"

"I don't know what new virtues he has awakened in my heart, but certain it is that he has made me ashamed of myself," said Béatrix. "I wish I were virtuous and at liberty to sacrifice to him something more than the remains of my heart and of my infamous slavery. I do not wish that either his destiny or my own should be left uncompleted."

"Cold heart: to love and count the cost!" exclaimed Camille, with a sort of horror.

"Call it what you choose, but I do not propose to ruin his life, to hang about his neck like a stone, and to become a source of everlasting regret. If I can't be his wife, I will not be his mistress. He has —You are not laughing at me? no? Well, his adorable love has purified me."

Camille bestowed upon Béatrix the most savage, ferocious glance that ever jealous woman bestowed upon her rival.

"Upon that ground," said she, "I thought that I stood alone. Béatrix, those words separate us forever, we are no longer friends. We are at the beginning of a mortal combat. I say to you now: you shall succumb or you shall fly—"

With that, she rushed into her bedroom after she had glared at the stupefied Béatrix, with the features of an infuriated lioness.

"Will you go to Le Croisic to-morrow?" she said a moment later, raising the portière.

"Certainly," the marchioness replied haughtily. "I will not fly and I will not succumb."

"I play with my cards on the table: I shall write to Conti," rejoined Camille.

Béatrix became as white as her gauze scarf.

"Each of us is playing for her life," she replied, not knowing which way to turn.

The violent passions aroused between the two women by this scene were allayed during the night. They both took thought to themselves and reverted to the system of deceitful temporization which possesses a great attraction for the majority of women; an excellent system as between women and men, but very bad as between woman and woman. In the midst of this last tempest, Mademoiselle des Touches heard the loud voice that triumphs over the bravest. Béatrix listened to the counsels of worldly jurisprudence; she was

afraid of the contempt of society. Félicité's final ruse, therefore, mingled with the accents of most fiendish jealousy, achieved a complete success. Calyste's error was repaired, but any fresh indiscretion might destroy his hopes forever.

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It was the latter part of the month of August and the skies were magnificently pure. On the horizon, the ocean had a tint as of molten silver, as in the southern seas, and tiny wavelets rippled upon the shore. A sort of luminous smoke, caused by the sun's rays falling perpendicularly upon the sand, produced an atmosphere at least very similar to that of the tropics. The salt appeared in little white blossoms on the surface of the ponds. The courageous *paludiers*, clad in white as if to resist the action of the sun, were at their posts early in the morning, armed with their long rakes, some leaning upon the low mud walls which mark the boundaries of the different properties, watching the chemical operations of nature, familiar to them from childhood; others playing with their wives and small children. The green dragoons known as customs officers were tranquilly smoking their pipes. There was a flavor of the Orient in the picture; for certain it is that a Parisian, suddenly transported thither, would not have believed that he was in France.

The baron and baroness, who had pretended that they were going to see how the salt harvest was progressing, were upon the jetty admiring the peaceful landscape, where no sound could be heard save the rhythmical moaning of the waves; and

gazing at the boats ploughing through the water, and at the green girdle of cultivated fields, the effect of which was the more charming because it is exceedingly rare upon the always desolate shores of old Ocean.

"Well, my friends, I have seen the marshes of Guérande once more before I die," said the baron to the *paludiers* who gathered on the edge of the marsh to salute him.

"Do the Du Guénics ever die?" said a *paludier*.

At that moment, the party from Les Touches arrived at the narrow path. The marchioness walked forward alone, Calyste and Camille following her arm in arm. Twenty yards behind came Gasselin.

"There are my father and mother," said the young man to Camille.

The marchioness stopped. Madame du Guénic experienced a most violent feeling of repulsion as her eyes fell upon Béatrix, who, however, was dressed to the best advantage: an Italian hat with a broad brim, trimmed with bluebells, and beneath it her hair neatly crimped; a dress of unbleached linen of a grayish shade, a blue sash with long floating ends, and the manner of a princess disguised as a shepherdess.

"She has no heart," said the baroness to herself.

"Mademoiselle," said Calyste to Camille, "this is Madame du Guénic and my father."

Then he said to the baron and baroness:

"Mademoiselle des Touches and Madame la Marquise de Rochefide, *née* De Casteran, father."

The baron saluted Mademoiselle des Touches, who made a humble and most grateful obeisance to the baroness.

"She really loves my son," Fanny thought; "she seems to wish to thank me for bringing Calyste into the world."

"You have come, as I have, to see if the crop will be a good one; but you have better reasons than I for your curiosity," said the baron to Camille, "for you have a proprietary interest, mademoiselle."

"Mademoiselle is the richest of all the proprietors," said one of the *paludiers*, "and may God preserve her! she is a *good lady*."

The two parties exchanged salutations and parted.

"One would say Mademoiselle des Touches was under thirty," said the baron to his wife. "She is very beautiful. And Calyste prefers that jade of a Parisian marchioness to the excellent child of Bretagne, does he?"

"Alas! yes," said the baroness.

A boat was waiting at the foot of the jetty, and the party embarked without cheerfulness. The marchioness was cold and dignified. Camille had scolded Calyste for his failure to obey, while explaining to him the present position of his affair of the heart. Calyste, plunged in dejection, glanced at Béatrix with eyes in which love and hate struggled for the mastery. Not a word was said during the brief passage from the jetty at Guérande to the further side of the harbor of Le Croisic, where the

salt was shipped after it had been brought thither in great earthen vessels by women who balanced them on their heads in such a way as to resemble caryatides. These women go barefooted and wear only a very short skirt. Many of them carelessly allow the handkerchiefs that cover their bosoms to fly about in the wind; some wear nothing but a chemise and they are the proudest of all; for the less clothing women wear, the more noble modesty they display.

The small Danish craft had finished taking in her cargo. The landing of the two lovely women therefore aroused the curiosity of the unoccupied salt carriers; and to escape their scrutiny as well as to do Calyste a service, Camille walked swiftly away toward the cliffs, leaving him to Béatrix. Gasselin put at least two hundred paces between his young master and himself.

Toward the sea, the peninsula of Le Croisic is bordered with granite cliffs of such extraordinarily capricious shapes that they can be thoroughly appreciated only by travelers who have had an opportunity to establish comparisons between them and other grand spectacles of nature at its wildest. It may be said that the cliffs of Le Croisic are as superior to other similar formations as the road to La Grande Chartreuse is admitted to be to other narrow valleys. Neither the shores of Corsica, where the granite assumes very singular forms, nor those of Sardinia, where nature has exerted herself to produce grand and awe-inspiring effects, nor the

basaltic cliffs of the northern seas are so absolutely unique in their singularity. Caprice has run riot there, composing endless arabesques, in which the most fantastic figures are twined and intertwined. Every imaginable shape may be found there. The imagination may well be fatigued by this vast gallery of monstrosities, which the sea invades when the wind blows a gale; and it has in the course of ages worn all the rough surfaces smooth. Beneath a natural arch, of a bold design imitated at a distance by Brunelleschi—for the greatest efforts of art are always a faltering copy of the effects of nature—you will find a basin polished like a marble bath-tub, its bottom covered with fine smooth white sand, where you can bathe fearlessly in four feet of lukewarm water. As you proceed, you gaze admiringly at the cool little bays, sheltered by rough-hewn but majestic gateways after the style of those at the Pitti Palace, that other copy of Nature's caprices. The ascents and descents are without number; nothing is lacking that the most fertile imagination can conceive or desire.

There can be seen too—and a very rare thing it is on the shore of the ocean; so rare that this is perhaps the only instance—a large thicket—*buisson*—of the plant to which that word owes its existence—the *buis* or box. This box, the greatest curiosity in all Le Croisic, where trees cannot grow, is about a league from the harbor, at the extreme end of the peninsula. Upon one of the headlands formed by the granite, which rise above the water to a height

that the waves never attain, even in the most violent storms, the caprice of the floods from above has worn away a hollow trough projecting about four feet from the southern face of the cliff. In this cleft, chance, or it may be the hand of man, has deposited sufficient vegetable mould to nourish a thick, flourishing bush of box, sown there, doubtless, by the birds. The condition of the roots indicates that it is at least three hundred years old. Below is a sheer precipice. The commotion of the waves, the marks of which are written in ineffaceable characters all along this coast, swept the fragments of granite away, no one can say whither. The sea flows to the base of this cliff without encountering a reef, and is five hundred feet deep at that point; close by are rocks just awash, their location being indicated and circumscribed by boiling foam, like the ring at a circus. It requires some courage and resolution to climb to the top of this miniature Gibraltar, which is almost round and from which a sudden gust of wind might hurl the venturesome traveler into the sea, or, worse still, upon the rocks below. This gigantic sentinel resembles the watch towers on the old châteaux from which the country for miles around could be seen, so that preparations could be made to resist attack; from there, you can see the steeple and the barren fields of Le Croisic, the sands and dunes that are a constant menace to the tilled lands and have invaded the territory of the village of Batz. Some ancient worthies assert that, in the very distant past, there was a fortified

château on this spot. The sardine fishermen have given a name to the rock, which can be seen a long way out at sea; but we crave forgiveness for having forgotten that Breton appellation, which is as hard to pronounce as to remember.

Calyste led Béatrix to this elevated spot, from which there is a superb view, and where the fanciful shape of the granite surpasses all that can have aroused one's amazed admiration along the sandy road that skirts the shore.

It is needless to explain why Camille had hurried on ahead. Like a wounded wild beast, she longed for solitude; she wandered about among the caves, reappeared upon points of rock, hunted the crabs from their holes or surprised them in the act of committing some of their amusing peccadilloes. In order not to be embarrassed by her female garb, she had donned a pair of trousers with embroidered ruffles, a short blouse, a beaver hat, and had for her walking stick a hunting crop, for she always prided herself upon her strength and agility; thus attired, she was a hundred times lovelier than Béatrix; she wore a little red China silk shawl with the ends crossed upon her bosom as such things are worn by children.

For some time, Béatrix and Calyste caught sight of her at intervals, flitting over the peaks and chasms like a will-o'-the-wisp, trying to turn her thoughts from her suffering by defying danger. She was the first to reach the rock where the box grows, and sat down in the shade in one of the

hollows, absorbed in thought. What could a woman like her do with her old age, after she had drained the cup of glory which all great talents, too greedy to enjoy the dull pleasures of self-esteem one by one, empty at a draught? She has since admitted that on that spot one of the reflections suggested by a trifle, by one of those accidents which seem of small account, perhaps, to ordinary people, but which present a world of reflections to great minds, led her to determine upon the singular act by which she was to sever all connection with social life. She took from her pocket a little box in which she had put some strawberry pastilles, in case of thirst; she took several of them, but, as she was eating them, she instinctively reflected that, although the strawberries no longer existed, they nevertheless lived again in their essential qualities. From that, she concluded that it might well be the same with ourselves. The sea, thereupon, appeared to her as an image of the infinite. No great mind, admitting the immortality of the soul, can escape the idea of the infinite without coming to believe in some state of future blessedness. That idea was still in her mind when she put her flagon of Portugal water to her nose. Thereupon, her manœuvring to deliver Béatrix over to Calyste seemed to her a very base proceeding: she felt that the woman was dying in her, setting free the noble, angelic creature hitherto veiled by the flesh. Her vast intellect, her learning, her stores of knowledge, her pretended passions had brought her face to face with what?—who would

have dared predict it?—with the fecund mother, the consoler of the afflicted, the Holy Roman Church, so gentle to the penitent, so poetic with the poets, so artless with children, so profound and mysterious to restless, untamed spirits, that one and all can always seek refuge in her bosom, and satisfy all their insatiable, incessantly aroused curiosity. She glanced back over the detours Calyste had induced her to make and compared them to the paths that wind in and out among those cliffs. Calyste was still, in her eyes, the lovely messenger from Heaven, her divine guide. She put earthly love to silence with divine love.

After they had walked along for some time without speaking, Calyste, at an exclamation from Béatrix concerning the grandeur of the ocean, which is so different from the Mediterranean, could not refrain from comparing it with his love in purity, in intensity, in agitation and in extent.

"It is bordered by cliffs," said Béatrix with a laugh.

"When you speak so to me," he replied, with a sublime glance at her, "I see you and hear your voice and in that way can be as patient as the angels; but when I am alone, you would pity me if you could see me. At such times, my mother weeps over my suffering."

"Come, Calyste, we must have done with this," said the marchioness returning to the sandy path. "It may be that we have reached the only appropriate place for saying such things as I am about to

say, for never in my life have I seen nature in more perfect harmony with my thoughts. I have seen Italy, where everything speaks of love; I have seen Switzerland, where everything is fresh and blooming and expresses true happiness of a laborious kind; where the verdure, the placid lakes, the most joyous landscapes are weighed down by the snow-covered Alps; but I have seen nothing which depicts more truly the scorching barrenness of my life than yonder little plain parched by the sea-breezes, corroded by the saline exhalations, where agriculture struggles dejectedly in sight of the mighty ocean, in sight of the flower gardens from which the towers of your Guérande arise. Such, Calyste, is Béatrix. So do not attach yourself to her. I love you, but I will never be yours in any sense of the word, for I am conscious of the desolation that reigns in my heart. Ah! you cannot guess how cruel I am to myself in speaking thus to you. No, you shall not see your idol, if I am your idol, lose her grandeur; she shall not fall from the pedestal upon which you have placed her. I have a horror now of a passion which society and religion frown upon; I will no longer be humiliated, or have to conceal my happiness; I will not break my present bonds, I will continue to be the sandy, barren desert, flowerless and verdureless, that lies before us."

"And suppose you should be abandoned?" said Calyste.

"Why, then I would go and sue for pardon, I would humble myself before the man I had insulted,

but I would never run the risk of plunging into a happiness which I know must soon end."

"End!" cried Calyste.

The marchioness forestalled the dithyrambic outburst in which her lover was about to indulge by repeating: "End!" in a tone that imposed silence upon him.

This contradiction aroused in the young man's heart one of those mute, internal paroxysms of fury, which only they who have loved without hope have ever known. Béatrix and he walked on for some distance in absolute silence, no longer looking at the sea or the cliffs or the fields of Le Croisic.

"I would make you so happy!" said Calyste at last.

"All men begin by promising to make us happy, and they leave us a legacy of infamy, desertion and distaste for the world. I have nothing with which to reproach the man to whom it is my duty to be faithful; he promised me nothing, I went to him; but the only possible way for me to lessen my sin is to make it last forever."

"Say, madame, that you do not love me! I love you so well that I know of my own knowledge that love doesn't discuss, it sees only itself; there is no sacrifice I would not make. Give the word and I will attempt the impossible. The man who despised his mistress because she threw her glove among the lions and bade him go and pick it up—that man didn't love! he did not realize your right to put us to the test in order to be sure of our love, and not to

lay down your arms except upon proof of superhuman grandeur. I would sacrifice my family, my name, my future to you."

"What an insult in that word sacrifice!" said she, in a reproachful tone that showed Calyste the folly of his declaration.

Only coquettes or women who love absolutely have the art of taking an unguarded word for a point of departure, from which to soar to a prodigious height; wit and sentiment follow the same process at such times; but the loving woman suffers and the coquette disdains.

"You are right," said Calyste, letting fall a tear, "that word can properly be applied only to the efforts you demand of me."

"Hush!" said Béatrix, struck by this reply, in which Calyste for the first time set forth his love with real eloquence; "I have been guilty enough, do not tempt me."

At that moment, they were at the foot of the cliff on which the box-wood grows, Calyste experienced the most intoxicating felicity in assisting the marchioness to ascend the cliff, for she was determined to go to the very top. In the youth's eyes, it was an unspeakably great favor to put his arm about that waist, to feel the slight trembling of that form: she needed him! The unhoped-for pleasure turned his head, his eyes swam, he seized Béatrix around the waist.

"How now!" said she, with an imposing air.

"Will you never be mine?" he demanded, in a voice strangled by a torrent of blood.

"Never, my friend," she replied. "I can be nothing to you but Béatrix, a dream. Is not that a pleasant thought? We shall have no bitterness or grief or repentance."

"And you will return to Conti?"

"I must."

"Then you shall never belong to any man!" exclaimed Calyste, pushing the marchioness away with frantic force.

He waited to listen for her fall, before hurling himself after her; but he heard only the dull thud of a body falling upon solid ground, followed by the sharp tearing of cloth. Instead of falling headforemost into the sea, Béatrix had turned over and landed in the box bush in the cleft of the rock; but she would have rolled over into the sea, however, had not her dress caught upon a projecting point, and, by tearing gradually lessened the strain of her body upon the shrub. Mademoiselle des Touches, who saw the whole scene, was so horrified that she could not cry out but could only motion to Gasselin to run to the spot. Calyste leaned over the brink with a sort of ferocious curiosity, saw Béatrix's plight and shuddered: she seemed to be praying, she believed that death was certain, she felt that the bush was on the point of giving way. With the sudden address that love imparts, with the supernatural agility that comes to the young in the face of danger, he clambered down some nine feet, by clinging to the asperities of the granite, until he reached the very brink of the cliff in time to take

the marchioness in his arms at the risk of falling into the sea with her. When he raised her, she was unconscious; but he could fancy that she was all his, there in that aërial nest, where they must remain a long while alone, and his first feeling was one of pleasure.

"Open your eyes, forgive me," he murmured, "or we will die together."

"Die?" said she, opening her eyes and her pallid lips.

Calyste greeted the word with a kiss, and thereupon was enchanted to feel that the marchioness shuddered convulsively. At that moment, Gasselin's hobnailed shoes made themselves heard overhead. The Breton was accompanied by Camille, with whom he consulted as to the best means of rescuing the lovers.

"There is only one way, mademoiselle," said Gasselin: "I will climb down there, then they can stand on my shoulders and you can give them a hand."

"And you?" said Camille.

The servant seemed surprised that he should be considered of any consequence when his young master was in danger.

"The better way is to go to Le Croisic for a ladder," said Camille.

"She's a mischief-maker all the same," said Gasselin to himself, as he turned away.

Béatrix, in a feeble voice, asked to be laid on the ground; she felt as if she were fainting, Calyste

placed her on the cool mould between the stone and the box-bush.

"I saw you, Calyste," said Camille. "Whether Béatrix die or be saved, it must never be anything but an accident."

"She will hate me," said he, with streaming eyes.

"She will adore you," said Camille. "This is the end of our excursion and we must take her back to Les Touches. What would have become of you, pray, if she had died?"

"I would have followed her."

"And what of your mother?"

Then, after a pause:

"And what of me?" she said softly.

Calyste stood with his back against the rock, pale and mute. Gasselin soon came running back from one of the small farmhouses scattered through the fields, with a ladder that he had found there. Béatrix had recovered her strength to some extent. When Gasselin had planted the ladder, the marchioness, assisted by the old servant,—who suggested to Calyste to pass Camille's red shawl under her arms and hand the ends to him,—succeeded in reaching the rounded summit of the headland, where Gasselin took her in his arms as he would a child, and carried her down to the shore.

"I wouldn't have feared death, but the agony of it!" she said, in a weak voice, to Mademoiselle des Touches.

The weakness and prostration that Béatrix displayed, compelled Camille to have her taken to the

farm where Gasselin borrowed the ladder. Calyste, Gasselin and Camille removed such of their clothes as they could spare, made a mattress on the ladder, placed Béatrix upon it and carried her as if upon a litter. The farmer and his wife offered their bed. Gasselin ran to the place where the horses were waiting, took one of them and rode off to Le Croisic for the doctor, after ordering the boatmen to come to the inlet nearest the farm.

Calyste, seated on a stool, answered with nods and occasional monosyllables, the questions put to him by Camille, who was no less disturbed by his condition than by Béatrix's. After she was bled, the patient felt decidedly better; she was able to speak, consented to go aboard the boat, and, about five in the afternoon, was carried from the jetty at Guérande to Les Touches, where the physician from the town was waiting. The news of the mishap had spread through that desolate, almost uninhabited region with inexplicable rapidity.

Calyste passed the night at Les Touches, sitting with Camille beside Béatrix's bed. The doctor had given his word that the marchioness would feel nothing more than a slight lameness on the morrow. Through Calyste's despair could be detected gleams of profound joy; he was beside his loved one's bed, his eyes were upon her, sleeping or waking; he could study her pale face and her slightest movement. Camille smiled bitterly as she recognized in his demeanor the symptoms of one of those passions which leave indelible traces upon a man's

heart and faculties, by entwining themselves with his life, at a time when there is no thought, no outside care to oppose this cruel internal travail.

Calyste would never see the real woman that lived in Béatrix. How ingenuously the youthful Breton allowed his most secret thoughts to be read upon his face!—he fancied that that woman belonged to him because he was sitting in her bedroom and admiring her in the *négligé* attire of the bed. He watched, with ecstatic attention, her slightest movements; his face denoted such fascinating curiosity, his joy made itself manifest so artlessly, that there came a moment when the two women glanced at each other with a smile. When Calyste saw the invalid's sea-green eyes lighted up with an expression of love and raillery and confusion commingled, he blushed and turned his head away.

"Didn't I tell you, Calyste, that you men promise us happiness, and end by throwing us over a precipice?"

At this jocose remark, uttered in a most seductive tone and denoting some change in Béatrix's heart, Calyste threw himself on his knees, took one of the moist hands which she surrendered to him, and kissed it most humbly.

"You have the right to reject my love forever, and I have no right to say a single word to you hereafter."

"Ah!" cried Camille, when she saw the expression upon Béatrix's face, and compared it to the one her diplomatic efforts had succeeded in depicting

thereon, "love will always have more wit of his own than all the rest of the world! Take your draught, my dear, and go to sleep."

That night passed by Calyste with Mademoiselle des Touches, who read works upon mystic theology while Calyste was reading *Indiana*, the first work of Camille's illustrious rival, in which is presented the captivating figure of a young man who loves with idolatrous devotion, with mysterious tranquillity and throughout his whole life, a woman in the same false position that Béatrix occupied—a book which set before him a fatal example!—that night left ineffaceable marks in the poor boy's heart, for Félicité made him understand that no woman, unless she were a perfect monster, could fail to be happy and flattered in every ramification of her vanity by having been the object of a crime.

"You wouldn't have pushed *me* into the water!" said poor Camille, wiping away a tear.

Toward morning, Calyste, utterly exhausted, fell asleep in his chair. It was then the marchioness's turn to gaze upon the lovely child, whose cheeks were paled by his emotions and by his first love vigil; she heard him murmuring her name in his sleep.

"He loves me even when he's asleep," she said to Camille.

"We must send him home to bed," said Camille, awakening him.

There was no anxiety in the Du Guénic household, for Mademoiselle des Touches had written a

line to the baroness. Calyste returned to Les Touches to dinner; he found Béatrix dressed, but pale and weak and languid; there was not the least trace of severity in her words or her looks, however.

After that evening, which Camille passed at the piano in order to allow Calyste to hold and press Béatrix's hands, neither of them being able to speak, there was not the slightest cloud upon the horizon at Les Touches. Félicité effaced herself completely. Cold, frail, slender, hard women, like Madame de Rochefide, women whose necks form a bony link between the head and body, making them vaguely resemble the feline species, have hearts of the same pale shade as their light gray or green eyes; and to melt, to liquefy those stony organs, nothing less than a stroke of lightning will suffice. In Madame de Rochefide's case, the frenzy of love and Calyste's assault upon her were the stroke of lightning which nothing can resist, and which subdues the most rebellious natures. Béatrix felt humbled within; pure, true love bathed her heart in its soft and soothing waves. She lived in a warm, delightful atmosphere of unfamiliar sentiments, wherein she seemed to be made greater, exalted; she entered the lofty realms wherein Bretagne has, from all time, enthroned woman. She relished the respectful adoration of this youth whose joy cost her so little, for a gesture, a glance, a word satisfied Calyste. The high price paid by the heart for these trifles touched her deeply. The glove upon which that angel was allowed to breathe might

become more to him than her whole person was to the man by whom she should have been adored. What a contrast! What woman could have resisted such constant deification? She was sure of being obeyed and understood. If she had told Calyste to risk his life to gratify her lightest whim, he would not even have reflected. And so Béatrix became immeasurably noble and imposing; she looked at love on the side of its grandeur, she sought in it a support to enable her to remain the most magnificent of all women in the eyes of Calyste, over whom she was determined to acquire a dominion that should know no end. Her coquetries were the more persistent because she felt that she was weaker than of old. She played the invalid for a whole week with fascinating hypocrisy. How many times did she make the circuit of the carpet of verdure that stretched from the façade of Les Touches to the garden, leaning upon Calyste's arm and thus paying back to Camille the torture she had inflicted upon her during the first week of her stay.

"Ah! my dear, you are forcing him to make a long journey," said Mademoiselle des Touches to the marchioness.

One evening, before the excursion to Le Croisic, the two women were talking about love and laughing over the different methods men adopt of declaring themselves, admitting to each other that the most adroit, and naturally the least loving, did not amuse themselves wandering back and forth in the labyrinths of sentimentality, and that they were quite

right; so that the men who love the best were, for a time, treated with less respect by them.

"They act like La Fontaine on his way to the Academy!" Camille had said.

Her last remark, by reproaching the marchioness for her machiavellianism, reminded her of that conversation. Madame de Rochefide had an absolutely effectual method of keeping Calyste within the limits to which she chose to confine him: with a gesture or a glance, she would remind him of his shocking violence on the edge of the cliff. Thereupon the poor martyr's eyes would fill with tears, he would hold his peace and swallow his arguments, his vows, his sufferings with a heroism which would most assuredly have touched any other woman. She drove him by her infernal coquetry to such utter desperation, that he threw himself one day in Camille's arms, beseeching her to advise him.

Béatrix, armed with the passage from Calyste's letter in which he said that to love was the greatest of joys, and that to be loved came after, made use of that axiom to restrict his passion to the respectful idolatry which suited her views. She was so fond of allowing her heart to be flattered by the sweet concerts of praise and adoration which nature suggests to young men; there is so much unstudied art, so much artless fascination in their outcries, in their entreaties, in their exclamations, in their appeals to themselves, in the mortgages they offer upon the future, that Béatrix was too crafty to reply. She had said that she doubted! it was not

yet a question of happiness, but of permission to love, which the child was always entreating for, persisting in his determination to carry the citadel on the strongest side, the moral side.

The woman who is strongest in speech is often very weak in action. After observing the progress he had made by pushing Béatrix into the sea, it is strange that Calyste did not continue to seek happiness by violent measures; but love in young men is such an ecstatic and religious sentiment, that it seeks to obtain everything by moral conviction: and thence it derives its sublimity.

Nevertheless, one day, the young Breton, driven to extremity by his longing, complained bitterly to Camille of Béatrix's conduct.

"I intended to cure you by showing you at once what she is," rejoined Mademoiselle des Touches, "but you spoiled everything by your impatience. Ten days ago you were her master; to-day you are her slave, my poor boy. It is plain, therefore, that you will never have the strength to carry out my orders."

"What must I do?"

"Pick a quarrel with her on the ground of her harsh treatment. A woman is always angered by hard words; irritate her till she abuses you, and don't return to Les Touches until she sends for you."

There is a time, in all violent sicknesses, when the patient will take the most severe remedies and undergo the most horrible operations. Calyste had

reached that stage. He followed Camille's advice and remained at home two days; but on the third day, he knocked at Béatrix's door and told her that Camille and himself were awaiting her at the breakfast table.

"Still another opportunity thrown away!" said Camille, when she saw him return in such cowardly fashion.

During those two days, Béatrix had paused many times at the window overlooking the Guérande road. When Camille surprised her there, she said that she was admiring the effect produced by the thorn-broom along the road, where its golden blossoms glistened in the September sun. Thus, Camille detected Béatrix's secret, and had but to say a single word to make Calyste happy, but she did not say it: she still had too much of the woman about her to urge him on to the act at which young hearts take fright, seeming to realize all that their ideal is destined to lose thereby.

Béatrix kept Camille and Calyste waiting for a long while. To any other than Calyste, the delay would have been significant, for the marchioness's toilet betrayed a desire to fascinate him and prevent any repetition of his absence. After breakfast, she went into the garden, and enchanted with delight the child she had long enchanted with love by expressing a desire to see once more the cliff where she had been so near death.

"Let us go alone," said Calyste, in a troubled voice.

"If I refused," she replied, "I should give you reason to think that you are dangerous. Alas!—as I have told you a thousand times, I belong to another and can never belong to any but him; I made my choice without knowing anything of love. The fault was twofold, and twofold the punishment."

When she spoke in this strain, her eyes half wet with the rare tears such women shed, Calyste had a feeling of compassion that allayed his ardent frenzy; he adored her then like a Madonna. We can no more expect different natures to resemble one another in the expression of their sentiments than we can expect trees of different kinds to bear the same fruits. Béatrix was violently agitated at that moment; she was wavering between herself and Calyste, between society to which she hoped some day to return, and unalloyed happiness; between ruining herself forever by a second unpardonable passion, and the pardon of society. She was beginning to listen, without even a pretence of anger, to the protestations of blind love; she allowed herself to be caressed by the gentle hands of Pity. Several times already, she had been moved to tears as she listened to Calyste promising to make up to her with his love for all that she would lose in the eyes of the world, and sympathizing with her because she was bound to an evil genius, a false-hearted wretch like Conti. More than once she had failed to close Calyste's mouth when she was telling him of the misery and suffering that had

overwhelmed her in Italy when she found that she was not alone in Conti's heart. Camille had given Calyste more than one lesson on that subject, Calyste profited by them.

"I will love you absolutely," he would say; "you will not enjoy artistic triumphs with me, nor the pleasurable emotion caused by a vast audience swayed by marvelous talent; my only talent will be to love you, my only joys will be yours; no woman's admiration will seem to me to deserve a recompense; you will have no hateful rivalry to fear; you are not appreciated, but where you are received, I would like to be received, too, every day."

She listened with lowered head, letting him kiss her hands, confessing silently, but with good grace, that perhaps she was an unappreciated angel.

"I have been too deeply humiliated," she replied; "my past deprives my future of all security."

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That was a day of days to Calyste, when, upon approaching Les Touches at seven in the morning, he caught a glimpse, between two clumps of thorn-broom, of Béatrix standing at a window, with the same straw hat upon her head that she had worn on the day of their excursion. A mist passed before his eyes. Such trifling details of passion make the world greater. It is doubtful if any but French women possess the secret of these *coups de théatre;* they owe them to their quick wit, and they have the art of introducing as many such effects in a sentiment as it will bear without losing its force.

Ah! how lightly her hand rested upon Calyste's arm. They went out together through the garden gate opening on the dunes. Béatrix thought the sand delightful; she spied some of the hardy little plants with pink flowers that grow there, and plucked several of them which she put with some Carthusian pinks—also indigenous in those barren sands—and divided the whole in a significant fashion with Calyste, to whom those flowers and that foliage were destined to be an everlasting, sinister memory.

"We will put some box with it," she said with a smile.

They waited some time for the boat on the jetty,

where Calyste told her of his childish performance on the day of her arrival.

"That escapade of yours, which I knew all about, was the cause of my severity the first day," said she.

During this jaunt, Madame de Rochefide adopted the slightly jocose tone of the woman who loves, as she adopted her affectionate manner and *abandon*. Calyste might well believe that she loved him. But when, as they walked along the sand at the foot of the cliffs, they went down into one of the little coves whither the waves have brought most wonderful mosaics composed of strange kinds of marble, and played together there like children, seeking the finest specimens—when Calyste, in the most intense excitement, explicitly proposed to her to fly to Ireland with him, she assumed a dignified, mysterious manner and asked him for his arm, and they went on toward the cliff, which she had named her Tarpeian Rock.

"My friend," said she as they slowly climbed to the top of that magnificent block of granite, which she might have taken for a pedestal, "I have not the courage to conceal from you how much you are to me. In the last ten years, I have had no pleasure comparable to that we have just enjoyed, hunting for shells among those rocks on the shore, exchanging pebbles with which I will make a necklace that will be more precious to me than if it were composed of the most superb diamonds. Just now I was a child, a little girl, what I was at fourteen or fifteen, and

then I was worthy of you. The love I have been fortunate enough to inspire in you has exalted me in my own eyes. Listen to these words with all their secret meaning. You have made me the proudest and happiest woman of my sex, and it is probable that you will live longer in my memory than I in yours."

At that moment, they had reached the highest point of the cliff, from which they could see on one side, the ocean, on the other, Bretagne with its golden islands, its feudal towers and its clumps of thornbroom. Never did woman stand upon a grander stage to make so momentous a confession.

"But," said she, "I do not belong to myself, I am more firmly bound by my own volition than I was by the law. Suffer the penalty of my wrongdoing therefore, and be content to know that we suffer together. Dante never saw Beatrice again, Petrarch never possessed his Laura. Such disasters happen only to great hearts. Ah! if I am deserted, if I fall a hundred degrees lower in shame and infamy, if your Béatrix is cruelly misunderstood by the world which will be terribly hard upon her, if she is the lowest of women!—then, my adored child," she continued, taking his hand, "you will know that she is the first of women, that she can rise to the skies, leaning upon you; but when that time comes, my dear," said she, with a sublime glance, "if you prefer to push her into the sea, do not miss your aim: after your love, death!"

Calyste had his arm about her waist, he pressed

her to his heart. To confirm the words that fell so sweetly on his ears, Madame de Rochefide deposited upon his brow the most chaste and most modest of all kisses. Then they went down together and wended their way slowly homeward, talking like people who have a perfect understanding; she believing that she had secured peace, he, with no further doubt of his good fortune, and both equally deceived.

Calyste, judging from what Camille had told him, hoped that Conti would be overjoyed to have this excuse for leaving Béatrix. The marchioness, for her part, abandoned herself to the uncertainties of her position, awaiting what chance might bring to pass. Calyste was too ingenuous, too deeply in love to invent the chance.

They arrived at Les Touches and entered the garden gate, both in a most delicious frame of mind. Calyste had taken the key. It was about six in the afternoon. The intoxicating perfumes, the mild atmosphere, the yellowish rays of the setting sun, all were in accord with their melting humor and their sentimental conversation. Their steps were as measured and harmonious as those of lovers; their movements betrayed a perfect union of thought.

The silence at Les Touches was so profound that the sound of the gate opening and closing could be heard throughout the garden. As Calyste and Béatrix had said all that they had to say, and as their agitated excursion had wearied them, they

walked softly along without speaking. Suddenly, at a bend in the path, Béatrix had a most horrible sensation, the contagious horror caused by the sight of a reptile, which made Calyste's blood run cold before he saw the cause of it. Sitting on a bench beneath an ash with overhanging branches, and talking with Camille Maupin, was Conti!

The convulsive, inward trembling of the marchioness was more evident than she knew; it showed Calyste how dear he had become to this woman who had just erected a barrier between herself and him, for the purpose, doubtless, of securing a few more days of coquetry before passing it. In a twinkling, a whole tragic drama was enacted in the depths of those hearts.

"I fancy you did not expect me so soon," said the artist to Béatrix, offering her his arm.

The marchioness could not refrain from dropping Calyste's arm and taking Conti's. This ignoble transition, imperiously commanded, which seemed to cast dishonor upon his new passion, overwhelmed Calyste, who went and threw himself upon the bench by Camille's side after exchanging the coldest of salutations with his rival. He experienced a multitude of opposing sensations: when he learned how Béatrix loved him, he felt a violent impulse to rush upon the artist, saying that Béatrix belonged to him; but the poor woman's inward convulsion, betraying all that she was suffering—for she had paid therein the price of all her sinning in a single moment—moved him so deeply, that he was fairly

stupefied, weighed down like herself by implacable necessity. These two contrary impulses produced within him the most violent of all the tempests which he had been compelled to face since he had loved Béatrix.

Madame de Rochefide and Conti passed in front of the bench on which Calyste was half lying beside Camille; the marchioness bestowed upon her rival one of the eloquent glances by which women can say whatever they wish to say, but she avoided Calyste's eyes and seemed to be listening to Conti, who was apparently indulging in banter.

"What can they be saying?" Calyste asked Camille.

"My dear child, you do not yet understand the terrible power over a woman that extinct love gives to a man! Béatrix could not refuse to give him her hand; he is joking her probably about her love affairs, for he must have guessed how the land lay from your attitude and the way in which you first appeared before him."

"Joking her, do you say?" said the impetuous youth.

"Calm yourself," said Camille, "or you will lose what remaining chances you have. If he rubs Béatrix's self-esteem a little too roughly, she will trample him under her feet like a worm. But he's an astute creature, and he will know how to act understandingly. He will not imagine that the proud Madame de Rochefide can have been false to him. There would be too much depravity in loving

a man just because of his beauty! He will probably describe you to her as a child whose vanity is aroused by the thought of winning a marchioness, and of making himself the arbiter of the destinies of two women. In short, he will discharge the whole entertaining artillery of the most insulting conjectures. Béatrix will then be compelled to resort to false denials which he will take advantage of to retain his mastery.

"Ah!" said Calyste, "he doesn't love her. If I were in his place, I would leave her free: love means freedom of selection at any moment, confirmed from day to day. The morrow sets the seal of approval on the day before and increases the fund of our pleasures. A few days later and he wouldn't have found us. What brought him back, then?"

"A journalistic joke," said Camille. "The opera, upon the success of which he relied, has fallen flat. The remark: 'It's hard to lose one's reputation and one's mistress at the same time!' made in the green room, by Claude Vignon perhaps, must have touched his vanity to the quick. Love based on petty sentiments is pitiless. I questioned him, but who can understand a nature so false and deceitful? He seems tired of his poverty and his love, disgusted with life. He regrets having formed so public a connection with the marchioness, and, in speaking of his former happiness, he delivered a poem of melancholy a little too clever to be true. He hoped, I have no doubt, to surprise me into

betraying the secret of your love, in the midst of the joy his flattery would cause me."

"Well?" said Calyste, watching Béatrix and Conti as they drew near, and wholly oblivious to what she was saying.

Camille, as a measure of prudence, had kept on the defensive, and had betrayed neither Calyste's secret nor Béatrix's. The artist was quite capable of hoodwinking everybody, and Camille urged Calyste to be on his guard against him.

"My dear child," said she, "this is the most critical moment for you; you need to exhibit a degree of prudence and adroitness which you do not possess, and you will allow yourself to be fooled by the craftiest man in the world, for I can do nothing for you now."

The clock announced the dinner hour. Conti offered his arm to Camille and Béatrix took Calyste's. Camille allowed the marchioness to go first to the house, and she had an opportunity to look at Calyste and enjoin discretion upon him by putting her finger to her lips.

Conti was excessively gay during dinner. Perhaps it was his method of testing Madame de Rochefide, who played her part very badly. As a coquette simply, she might have deceived Conti; but, being in love, her secret was betrayed. The crafty musician, far from taking advantage of her embarrassment, did not seem to notice it. He led the conversation at dessert to the subject of women, and lauded the nobility of their sentiments.

"A woman who is on the point of abandoning us in our prosperity, sacrifices everything for us in adversity," he said. "Women have, over men, the advantage of constancy; they must have been very deeply wounded to induce them to leave a first lover; they cling to him as to their honor; a second passion is degrading," etc., etc.

His moral reflections were unexceptionable, he burned incense at the altar upon which a heart was bleeding, pierced by a thousand thrusts. Camille and Béatrix alone understood the bitter mockery of the poisoned epigrams which he discharged between eulogies. From time to time both of them blushed, but they were compelled to contain themselves; they went upstairs to Camille's apartments arm-in-arm, passing, by a common impulse, through the large salon, where there was no light and they could be alone for a moment.

"It is impossible for me to allow Conti to walk over my body, or to triumph over me," said Béatrix in a low voice. "The galley-slave is always under the domination of the comrade to whom he is chained. I am lost; I must return to the galleys of love. And you have forced me to it! Ah! you sent for him a day too late or a day too soon! I recognize your infernal talent as an author in this move; the vengeance is complete and the catastrophe perfect!"

"I may have said that I would write to Conti, but as to doing it—I am incapable of such a thing!"

cried Camille. "You are suffering, so I forgive you."

"What will become of Calyste"? said the marchioness, with admirably artless self-conceit.

"Then Conti is to take you away with him, is he?" queried Camille.

"Ah! you anticipate a triumph?" cried Béatrix.

The marchioness hurled these words at Camille in a frenzy of rage and with her lovely features all distorted, while Camille tried to conceal her delight beneath a false expression of sadness; but the brilliancy of her eyes gave the lie to the contraction of her mask, and Béatrix was a connoisseur in grimaces! And so, when they looked at each other in the light, sitting on the same divan on which so many comedies had been enacted in the last three weeks, and where the secret tragedy of so many thwarted passions was beginning, the two women took each other's measure for the last time: they realized then that they were separated by bitter hate.

"Calyste will remain with you," said Béatrix, looking into her friend's eyes; "but I am firmly established in his heart and no woman can ever drive me from it."

Camille retorted, in an indescribably ironical tone, which cut the marchioness to the heart, with the famous words of Mazarin's niece to Louis XIV.: "*Tu règnes, tu l'aimes, et tu pars!*"—You reign, you love and you *depart.*—

Neither of the two, during this very animated

scene, had noticed the absence of Calyste and Conti. The artist had remained at table with his rival, bidding him bear him company and finish a bottle of champagne.

"We have something to say to each other," said Conti to forestall any possible refusal on Calyste's part.

In their respective positions, the young Breton was compelled to obey this command.

"My dear fellow," said the musician in a wheedling voice, when the poor child had drank two glasses of wine, "we are both sensible men and can talk frankly. I did not come here because I am suspicious. Béatrix loves me," he added with a most fatuous gesture. "But I no longer love her; I did not come here to take her away, but to break with her and leave her the honors of the rupture. You are young, you don't know how advantageous a thing it is to seem to be the victim, when you know that you are the executioner. Young men flash fire and flames, they abandon a woman with a great noise, they often treat her with contempt and earn her hatred; but judicious men arrange matters so that they are dismissed themselves, and assume a humiliated air which leaves to the woman regret and a soothing consciousness of her superiority. The disfavor of the divinity is not irreparable, while abjuration is beyond remedy. Luckily for you, you do not as yet know how embarrassed we are throughout our lives by the insensate promises women are foolish enough to accept, when the

exigencies of gallantry require us to weave slip knots with them to employ the leisure hours of happiness. Then we swear to belong to each other forever. If we have an intrigue with a woman, we never fail to tell her politely that we would like to pass our life with her; we pretend to await with the greatest impatience the death of a husband while we really hope that he enjoys the most perfect health. Let the husband die, and there are provincial dames or perverse creatures, foolish or sly enough to come running to you with a: 'Here I am, I am free!' No one of us is free. The cannon-ball death awakes and falls in the midst of our proudest triumphs or our most skilfully arranged pleasures. I saw that you would fall in love with Béatrix, and I left her in a position where, without abating one whit of her sacred majesty, she would surely flirt with you, were it only to annoy that angel of a Camille Maupin. Well, my dearest boy, love her and you will do me a favor, for I want her to treat me shamefully. I am afraid of her pride and her virtue. Perhaps, despite my good will, we shall need time to manage this criss-cross arrangement. On such occasions as this, it is to one's advantage not to begin the fire. As we walked about the garden just now, I undertook to tell her that I knew all and to congratulate her on her good-fortune. Would you believe it? she lost her temper. At this moment, I am over head and ears in love with the youngest and loveliest of our cantatrices, Mademoiselle Falcon, of the Opéra, and I mean to marry her! Yes,

I am as far gone as that; but, when you come to Paris, you will see that I have exchanged the marchioness for a queen!"

Joy spread its halo about the open-hearted Calyste's countenance; he confessed his love and that was all that Conti wanted. There is no man, however depraved, however surfeited he may be, whose passion does not rekindle the instant that he finds it threatened by a rival. You may desire to abandon a woman, but you do not choose that she shall abandon you. When lovers reach that extremity, men and women do their utmost to take the lead, so deep is the wound inflicted upon the self-esteem. Indeed, it may be said that the struggle involves all that society has included in that sentiment, which is not so much self-esteem as life itself, whose future is threatened at such crises; it seems as if one were losing his principal and not his income. Questioned by the artist, Calyste narrated all that had taken place at Les Touches during the past three weeks, and was delighted with the conduct of Conti, who dissembled his rage beneath a mask of charming good-fellowship.

"Let us go upstairs," said he. "Women are suspicious creatures, they won't understand how we can remain together without tearing each other's hair out, and they may come and listen. I will help you all I can, my dear boy. I shall be rough and unendurable with the marchioness, I shall pretend to be jealous and to suspect her constantly of betraying me; there's no better way of driving a

woman to treachery; your desires will be gratified and I shall be free. Play the part of a disappointed lover to-night, and I will be the jealous, suspicious man. Pity the angel because she belongs to a man of no delicacy; weep over her! You can weep, for you are young. Alas! I can no longer weep; that is one great advantage that I lack."

Calyste and Conti went upstairs. The musician, being requested by his youthful rival to sing, sang the greatest musical masterpiece in existence for concert singers, the famous *Pria che spunti l'aurora*, which Rubini himself never attempts without a tremor, and in which Conti had won many a triumph. He was never more superb than at that moment when so many emotions were raging in his breast.

Calyste was in ecstasy. At the first word of the cavatina, the artist gave the marchioness a glance which imparted a cruel meaning to the words—a meaning that she understood. Camille, who was playing the accompaniment, divined the command expressed in that glance, which made Béatrix hang her head; she looked at Calyste and concluded that the boy had fallen into some trap or other, notwithstanding her warning. She was certain of it when the joyous Breton went up to Béatrix to bid her good-night, from the confident, crafty manner with which he kissed her hand and pressed it.

Before Calyste reached Guérande, the maid and other servants were loading the luggage upon Conti's traveling carriage, and *at daybreak*, as he

had said, he was driving Béatrix away to the first posting station, with Camille's horses. Under cover of the darkness, Madame de Rochefide was enabled to gaze at the town, whose towers, whitened by the first rays of dawn, glistened in the twilight, and to abandon herself to her profound melancholy: she was leaving behind one of the loveliest flowers of her life, such a passion as the purest maidens dream of inspiring. Fear of the world shattered the only genuine love this woman had ever known or was likely ever to know in her whole life. The society woman obeyed the laws of society, she sacrificed love to appearances, as other women sacrifice it to religion or duty. Pride often rises to the level of virtue. From this point of view, this ghastly story is the story of many women. The next day, Calyste came to Les Touches about noon. When he reached that point in the road from which on the previous morning he had seen Béatrix at the window, he saw Camille there. She ran to meet him and flung this cruel word at him at the foot of the stairs:

"Gone!"

"Beatrix?" said Calyste, aghast.

"Conti hoodwinked you completely; you said nothing to me, so I could do nothing."

She led the poor youth into her little salon; he threw himself on the divan, in the room where he had so often seen the marchioness, and burst into tears. Félicité said nothing, but smoked her hookah in silence, knowing that there is nothing to be done

during the first paroxysms of grief, which are always deaf and dumb. Calyste, having no idea what to do, passed the whole day in utter dejection. Just before dinner was announced, Camille attempted to say a few words to him, after entreating him to listen to her.

"My friend, you have once more caused me bitter suffering and I have not, as you have, a happy life before me to effect a cure. For me the earth has no more springtime, the heart has no more love. Therefore I have to look higher for consolation. In this room, on the day before Béatrix came, I drew her portrait for you; I did not wish to speak ill of her to you, for you would have thought me jealous of her. Now, listen to the truth. Madame de Rochefide is very, very far from being worthy of you. The publicity of her fall was entirely unnecessary, but she would have amounted to nothing without that fuss, so she went about it in cold blood in order to give herself a leading rôle: she is one of those women who prefer the scandal of a sin to tranquil happiness; they insult society to obtain the fatal boon of calumny, they are determined to make themselves talked about at any price. She was consumed with vanity. Her fortune, her wit had proved ineffectual to obtain for her the feminine royalty she sought to win for herself by erecting a throne in a salon; she thought she could acquire the celebrity of the Duchesse de Langeais and the Vicomtesse de Beauséant; but the world is just and bestows the honor of its

interest on none but genuine sentiments. Béatrix in a comedy part is voted a second-rate actress. Her flight to Italy was justified by no emergency. The sword of Damocles did not gleam at her fêtes, and, moreover, it is very easy to be happy on the sly in Paris, when one loves deeply and sincerely. In a word, had she been simply a loving, devoted woman, she would not have gone with Conti that night."

Camille talked for a long while and very eloquently; but this final effort was unavailing, and she ceased at a gesture from Calyste expressive of absolute faith in Béatrix; she compelled him to go down and sit with her while she dined, for it was impossible for him to eat.

It is only during extreme youth that these contractions of the heart take place. Later, the organs fall into regular habits and become hardened, so to speak. The reaction of mental emotions upon the physique is not powerful enough to produce a mortal disease unless the system has retained its primitive delicacy. An adult resists a violent wrench which kills a younger man, not so much because his affections are weaker as because his organs are stronger. So Mademoiselle des Touches was terrified at first by the calm and resigned attitude assumed by Calyste after his first flood of tears. Before leaving her, he requested permission to see Béatrix's chamber once more, and buried his head in the pillow upon which hers had rested.

"I am acting like a madman," he said, grasping

Camille's hand and leaving her with profound melancholy.

He returned home, found the usual party absorbed in their game of *mouche*, and sat beside his mother the whole evening. The curé, the Chevalier du Halga and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël all knew of Madame de Rochefide's departure, and were all delighted. Calyste would come back to them now, they thought; consequently they all watched him almost gloomily, as they saw that he was inclined to be taciturn. No one in that old manor could realize the inevitable end of that passion in a heart so innocent and sincere as Calyste's.

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For some days, Calyste went regularly to Les Touches; he walked back and forth around the greensward, where he had sometimes walked with Béatrix on his arm. Often he went to Le Croisic and climbed to the rock from which he had tried to push her into the sea: he would remain for hours lying against the box-wood, for, by dint of studying the projections and points of support in the cleft, he had learned how to let himself down into it and climb up again.

His solitary walks, his silence and his sober face aroused his mother's anxiety at last. After a fortnight of this life, not unlike that of a caged wild beast—this despairing lover's cage was, as La Fontaine expresses it, *the places honored by the steps, illumined by the eyes* of Béatrix—Calyste ceased to cross the little arm of the sea; he felt too weak to do more than drag himself as far as that spot on the Guérande road from which he had seen Béatrix at the window. The family, overjoyed at the departure of the Parisians, to use the provincial expression, detected nothing ominous or indicative of ill health in Calyste's appearance. The two old maids and the curé, carrying out their plan, had kept Charlotte de Kergarouët at Guérande, and she lavished her cajoleries upon Calyste every evening, but obtained nothing from him save advice as to

playing her hand at *mouche*. Throughout the evening, Calyste would sit between his mother and his would-be, Breton fiancée, closely watched by the curé and by Charlotte's aunt, who, as they returned home, discussed his more or less evident dejection. They mistook the unhappy youth's indifference for submission to their projects.

One evening, when Calyste had gone early to bed, thoroughly worn out, they all laid their cards on the table and looked at one another as they heard his chamber door close. They had listened anxiously to the sound of his footsteps.

"Something is wrong with Calyste," said the baroness, wiping her eyes.

"Nothing is wrong with him," rejoined Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël; "we must marry him off at once."

"Do you think that will divert him?" said the chevalier.

Charlotte gazed sternly at Monsieur du Halga, who seemed to her, that evening, to be very ill-bred, immoral, depraved, irreligious, and absurd with his dog, notwithstanding the observations of her aunt, who defended the old sailor.

"To-morrow morning, I will give Calyste a lecture," said the baron, whom they thought asleep; "I would not like to leave this world without seeing my grandson, a pink and white Guénic, lying in his cradle with a Breton cap on his head."

"He doesn't say a word," said old Zéphirine, "so no one can tell what is the matter with him;

he never ate so little; what does he live on? if he takes any meals at Les Touches the devil's kitchen does him little good."

"He's in love," said the chevalier, putting forth the suggestion with excessive timidity.

"Come, come, you old rake! you haven't put anything in the pot," said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël. "When you begin to think about your young days, you forget everything else."

"Come and take luncheon with us to-morrow morning," said old Zéphirine to Jacqueline and Charlotte; "my brother will talk some reason into his son, and we will arrange everything. One nail drives out the other."

"Not among the Bretons," said the chevalier.

The next morning Calyste saw Charlotte enter the house, dressed with extraordinary elegance, just as the baron in the dining-room was finishing a discourse on the subject of matrimony to which he was unable to find any reply; he was well aware of the ignorance of his father, his mother, his aunt and their friends; he was reaping the fruit of the tree of knowledge; he found himself completely isolated from them and he no longer spoke the domestic language. So he simply asked his father for a delay of a few days, whereupon the baron rubbed his hands for joy and gave the baroness new life by whispering the good news in her ear.

The luncheon was very animating. Charlotte, who had received a significant signal from the baron, was bubbling over with high spirits. The rumor of

a perfect understanding between the Du Guénics and the Kergarouëts leaked out through Gasselin and spread all over the town. After luncheon, Calyste followed Charlotte into the garden from the large hall; he offered her his arm and led her beneath the arbor at the further end of the garden. The old people were at the window, watching them with deep emotion. Charlotte turned and looked back at the attractive garden front of the house, and considerably disturbed by her companion's silence, seized upon the fact as a pretext for beginning the conversation.

"They are watching us!" she said.

"They don't hear what we say."

"No, but they can see us."

"Let us sit down, Charlotte," rejoined Calyste gently, taking her hand.

"Is it true that your banner used to wave at the top of that twisted column?" queried Charlotte, looking at the house as if it were already her own. "It would look well there! How happy one could be here! You will make some changes in the interior of the house, won't you, Calyste?"

"I shall not have time, my dear Charlotte," said the young man, taking both her hands and kissing them. "I am going to entrust you with my secret. I love a certain person—a person whom you have seen and who loves me—too dearly to be able to make any other woman happy, although I know that we have been destined for each other from our childhood."

"But she is married, Calyste," said Charlotte.

"I will wait," the young man replied.

"And so will I," said Charlotte, as her eyes filled with tears. "You will not love that woman long; she went away with a singer, they say—"

"Marry, my dear Charlotte," Calyste interposed. "With the fortune your aunt proposes to give you —and it is an enormous one for Bretagne—you can choose a better man than I am. You will find some man with a title. I did not take you aside to tell you what you already know, but to conjure you, in the name of our childish friendship, to take the rupture upon yourself and refuse my hand. Say that you will not accept a man whose heart is not free, and my passion will not, at all events, have the effect of putting an affront upon you. You cannot imagine what a burden life is to me! I cannot maintain a contest of any sort; I am as weak as a man abandoned by his soul, by the very essence of his life. Except for the grief my death would cause my mother and my aunt I should have thrown myself into the sea before this, and I have never visited the cliffs of Le Croisic since the day when the temptation became almost irresistible. Do not speak of this. Adieu, Charlotte."

He drew the girl's head toward him, kissed her on the hair, left the garden by the path leading from the gable end of the house, and fled to Camille, with whom he remained until midnight.

When he returned home at one o'clock in the morning he found his mother at her embroidery

frame waiting for him. He entered the house softly, pressed her hand and asked:

"Has Charlotte gone?"

"She goes to-morrow with her aunt, to the despair of both. Come to Ireland, dear Calyste," said she.

"How many times I have thought of flying thither!" he replied.

"Ah!" cried the baroness.

"With Béatrix," he added.

A few days after Charlotte's departure, Calyste accompanied the Chevalier du Halga during his promenade on the mall and sat down in the sun upon a bench from which his eyes embraced the whole countryside, from the weathercocks of Les Touches to the reefs whose location is indicated by the foaming ripples that play above submerged rocks. Calyste was, at this moment, thin and pale, his strength was failing, he was beginning to feel the intermittent chills that denote the approach of fever. His eyes, surrounded by dark rings, had the feverish brilliancy that constant brooding thought imparts to the eyes of recluses, or the ardor of combat to those of the intrepid fighters of our present civilization. The chevalier was the only person with whom he exchanged a word now and then: he had discovered in the old man an apostle of his own religion, and had detected in him the vestiges of an undying passion.

"Have you loved more than one woman in your life?" he asked, the second time that they *made*

sail in company on the mall, as the old sailor expressed it.

"Only one," replied the chevalier.

"Was she free?"

"No," was the reply. "Ah! I suffered terribly! she was the wife of my best friend, my patron, my commander, but we loved each other so well!"

"Did she love you?" Calyste asked.

"Passionately," the chevalier replied with far more than his usual animation.

"Were you happy?"

"Until her death; she died at forty-nine, during the emigration, at Saint Petersburg; the climate there killed her. She must be very cold in her coffin! I have often thought of going there for her body and bringing it to our dear Bretagne, to lie beside me! But she sleeps in my heart."

The chevalier wiped his eyes; Calyste took his hands and pressed them.

"I think more of this dog than of my life," said he, pointing to Thisbé. The little creature resembles in every respect the one she caressed with her lovely hands and took upon her knees. I never look at Thisbé without seeing Madame l'Amirale's hands."

"Did you see Madame de Rochefide?" inquired Calyste.

"No," the chevalier replied. "For fifty-eight years I have taken no notice of any woman except your mother, who has something of Madame l'Amirale's complexion."

Three days later, the chevalier said to Calyste on the mall:

"My boy, I have only a hundred and forty louis in the world. When you find out where Madame de Rochefide is, come to me and get them so that you may go and see her."

Calyste thanked the old man, whose placid existence aroused his envy. But, from day to day he became more morose, he appeared to care for no one, it seemed as if everybody did something to wound him; he was now gentle and good-humored only with his mother. The baroness followed with increasing anxiety the progress of his madness; she only, by dint of persistent entreaty, could succeed in inducing Calyste to eat.

Toward the beginning of October, the young invalid ceased to go to the mall with the chevalier, who came unavailingly to the house to take him to walk, exerting all the power of an old man's cajolery.

"We will talk about Madame de Rochefide," he would say. "I'll tell you about my first affair."—"Your son is very ill," he said to the baroness, when his entreaties proved useless.

Calyste answered all inquiries to the effect that he was marvelously well, and like all melancholy youths, he took pleasure in tasting death beforehand; but he no longer left the house, except to go into the garden, where he would sit upon the bench, warming himself in the pale, warm autumn sunlight, alone with his thoughts, avoiding all companionship.

When Calyste ceased to come to Les Touches, Félicité wrote to the curé of Guérande begging him to call upon her. Abbé Grimont's assiduity thereafter, when he fell into the habit of passing every morning at Guérande and sometimes dining there, created a great sensation; it was talked about all over the neighborhood and even at Nantes. Nevertheless, he never missed an evening at the Hôtel du Guénic, where desolation reigned. Masters and servants, all were equally distressed by Calyste's obstinacy, without realizing his real danger; it did not occur to one of those good people that the poor young man might die of love. The chevalier had fallen in with no instance of such a death in his travels, and had heard of none. They all attributed Calyste's thinness to lack of food. His mother went on her knees to him, begging him to eat. Calyste, to please his mother, strove to conquer his repugnance. Food swallowed against his will, hastened the progress of the slow fever that was consuming the handsome youth.

In the latter part of October, the beloved child ceased to go up to the second floor to sleep; his bed was placed in the lower hall, and there he remained most of the time, surrounded by his family, who had recourse at last to the village doctor. He tried to break up the fever with quinine, and the fever yielded for a few days. He prescribed physical exercise and distraction. The baron summoned up some energy and emerged from his apathy; he became young again as his son grew old. He took out

Calyste, Gasselin and his two noble hunting dogs. Calyste complied with his father's wishes, and for a few days, the three hunted together; they went into the forest, they visited their friends in the neighboring château; but Calyste showed no sign of cheerfulness, no one could extort a smile from him, his livid, distorted features betrayed an entire absence of volition.

The baron, overcome by fatigue, fell into a horrible state of lassitude and was obliged to return home, taking Calyste with him in the same condition. A few days after their return, the father and son were both so dangerously ill that they were obliged to send for the two most famous doctors in Nantes, at the suggestion of the Guérande practitioner himself. The baron had been fairly crushed by the marked change in Calyste. Endowed with the startling clearness of vision which nature bestows upon the moribund, he trembled like a child at the thought of the extinction of his race: he said nothing, but clasped his hands and prayed, sitting in his armchair to which his weakness confined him. His face was turned toward Calyste's bed and he watched him incessantly. At his son's slightest movement, he felt a painful internal commotion as if the torch of his life were flickering.

The baroness passed all her time in the hall, where old Zéphirine sat knitting in the chimney corner in a distressing state of anxiety; they were constantly asking her for wood, for the father and son were quite cold all the time; they attacked her

provisions; indeed, she had at last made up her mind to give up her keys, being no longer sufficiently active to follow Mariotte; but she insisted upon knowing everything, she questioned Mariotte and her sister-in-law, in an undertone, every minute in the day; she took them aside in order to ascertain the condition of her brother and her nephew.

One evening, while Calyste and the baron were both dozing, old Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël told her that there was no doubt that she must resign herself to the baron's death, for his face had turned to the color of wax; whereupon she dropped her knitting, felt in her pocket, from which she produced an old rosary of black wood, and began to tell her beads with a fervor which imparted such energy and grandeur to her pinched, withered face, that the other old maid followed her friend's example; with that, all the others, at a signal from the curé, joined Mademoiselle du Guénic in her mental exaltation.

"I was the first to pray God for him," said the baroness, remembering the fatal letter written by Calyste, "and he did not listen to me!"

"Perhaps we should do well," said Abbé Grimont, "to ask Mademoiselle des Touches to come and see Calyste."

"She!" cried old Zéphirine, "the author of all our woes, who turned him against his family, took him away from us, gave him wicked books to read and taught him the language of heretics! My curse on her, and may God never forgive her! She has crushed the Du Guénics."

"She will raise them again, perhaps," said the curé, gently. "She is a devout and virtuous woman; I will answer for it that she has only the best of intentions concerning him. May she be able to carry them out!"

"Let me know the day that she is to set her foot in this house, and I will leave it," cried the old maid. "She has killed the father and the son. Do you suppose I don't hear Calyste's feeble voice? He has hardly strength enough to speak."

At that moment, the three doctors came in; they wearied Calyste with questions; but their examination of the father lasted but a short time; they were agreed in a moment that it was marvelous that he was still alive. The doctor from Guérande coolly informed the baroness, with reference to Calyste, that it would probably be necessary to take him to Paris to consult the most eminent specialists, as it would cost a hundred louis to bring them to Bretagne.

"People die of something; but love is nothing," said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"Alas! whatever the cause, Calyste is dying," said the baroness; "I can see that he has all the symptoms of consumption, the most horrible disease known in my country."

"Calyste is dying, do you say?" said the baron, opening his eyes, from which two great tears crept and retarded by the numerous wrinkles, trickled slowly down to the bottom of his cheeks,—the only tears, in all likelihood, that he had shed in his life.

He stood up, tottered to his son's bed, took his hands and gazed earnestly at him.

"What do you want, father?" said Calyste.

"I want you to live!" cried the baron.

"I could not live without Béatrix," Calyste replied, and the old man fell back into his chair.

"Where can we get a hundred louis to bring the doctors from Paris?" said the baroness. "It is not too late."

"A hundred louis!" cried Zéphirine. "Would it save his life?"

Without awaiting her sister-in-law's reply, the old maid put her hands through the placket hole of her dress and unfastened her under petticoat, which fell to the floor with a dull thud. She knew so well the places in which she had sewn her louis, that she ripped them out with a celerity that smacked of magic. The gold pieces fell into her lap one by one with a jingling noise. Old Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël watched her, paralyzed with amazement.

"Why, they're looking at you!" said she in her friend's ear.

"Thirty-seven," said Zéphirine, continuing her count.

"Everyone will know how many you have."

"Forty-two—"

"Double louis, all new: where did you get them, since you can't see?"

"I felt them. Here are a hundred and forty louis," cried Zéphirine. "Will that be enough?"

"What has happened to you?" demanded the

Chevalier du Halga, who came in at that moment, and was unable to understand his old friend's attitude, with her lap full of louis.

In two words, Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël explained the condition of affairs to the chevalier.

"I knew all about it," he said, "and I came to bring you a hundred and forty louis, which I put at Calyste's disposal, as he well knows."

The chevalier took two rolls of money from his pocket, and exhibited the contents. Mariotte, when she saw this accumulation of treasure, told Gasselin to close the door.

"Gold won't restore him to health," said the baroness, weeping.

"But it may serve to enable him to run after the marchioness," rejoined the chevalier. "Come, Calyste!"

Calyste sat up in bed and cried joyfully:

"Let us start!"

"He will live," said the baron in a suffering tone, "and I can die. Send for the curé."

His words caused a thrill of dismay. Calyste, when he saw his father turn as pale as death under the strain of the cruel emotions aroused by this scene, could not keep back his tears. The curé, who knew of the decision arrived at by the doctors, had gone to consult Mademoiselle des Touches, for his present admiration for her was as great as had been his former repugnance, and he defended her as a pastor should defend one of the favorite sheep of his flock.

A number of people had assembled in the lane at the news of the baron's desperate condition: peasants, *paludiers* and townspeople knelt in the courtyard while Abbé Grimont administered the sacraments to the old Breton warrior. The whole town was deeply moved to learn that the father was dying beside his sick son. The extinction of this venerable Breton family was looked upon as a public calamity.

The ceremony made a deep impression upon Calyste. His grief imposed silence for a moment upon his love; during the dying agony of the heroic defender of the monarchy, he knelt beside his bed, weeping, and watching the approach of death. The old man breathed his last in his armchair, in the presence of his whole family.

I die faithful to the king and the religion. O God, I pray Thee to allow Calyste to live, as the reward of my efforts!" he said.

"Father, I will live, I will obey you," the youth replied.

"If you wish to make my death as happy as Fanny has made my life, swear to marry."

"I promise, father."

It was a touching spectacle to see Calyste, or his ghost rather, leaning on the old Chevalier du Halga —a spectre leading a ghost—following the baron's coffin and carrying the pall. The church and the little square in front were filled with people who had come from ten leagues around.

The baroness and Zéphirine were bitterly grieved

when they saw that, despite his struggles to comply with his father's dying wish, Calyste continued in a stupor of evil augury. On the day on which the family donned their mourning, the baroness led her son to the bench in the garden and questioned him. Calyste answered gently and submissively, but his answers were in a most despairing tone.

"Mother," said he, "there is no life left in me: the things I eat do not nourish me, the air as it enters my lungs doesn't freshen my blood; the sun seems cold to me, and when, for you, it shines on the front of our house as at this moment, where you see the old carvings in a blaze of light, I see indistinct shapes enveloped in mist. If Béatrix were here, everything would become bright again. There is only one thing on earth that has her coloring and her shape, and that is this flower in these green leaves," he said, taking from his breast the withered bouquet the marchioness had given him, and showing it to his mother.

The baroness dared not ask him any further questions, for there was more madness in his replies than grief in his silence. But Calyste started violently when he saw Mademoiselle des Touches through the windows. She reminded him of Béatrix. It was to Camille, therefore, that the two despairing women owed the first gleam of joy that shone through the darkness of their mourning.

"Well, Calyste," said Mademoiselle des Touches as she caught sight of him, "the carriage is ready and we will go together and find Béatrix; come!"

The pale, thin face of the young man in mourning garb was instantly suffused with red, and a smile lighted up his features.

"We will save him," said Mademoiselle des Touches to the baroness, who pressed her hand, weeping for joy.

Mademoiselle des Touches, the baroness and Calyste started for Paris a week after the baron's death, leaving everything in charge of old Zéphirine.

Camille's affection for Calyste had led her to plan a most desirable future for the poor child. Being connected with the Grandlieu family, the ducal branch of which was about to end in five daughters, she had written to the Duchesse de Grandlieu, telling her Calyste's story and announcing her purpose to sell her house on Rue du Mont-Blanc, for which certain speculators had offered her two millions and a half. Her man of business had purchased for her, in its place, one of the finest mansions on Rue de Bourbon, for seven hundred thousand francs. Of the balance of the price of the Rue du Mont-Blanc property she would set aside one million to redeem the Du Guénic estates, and would settle her whole fortune upon the duchess's five daughters. She was aware of the plans of the duke and duchess, who intended that the youngest of the five should marry the Vicomte de Grandlieu, the probable inheritor of the title; she knew that Clotilde-Frédérique, the second, was determined to remain single although with no intention

of becoming an abbess like the oldest sister, and there remained only the last but one, pretty Sabine, at this time twenty years of age; to her, she committed the task of curing Calyste of his passion for Madame de Rochefide.

During the journey, Camille informed the baroness of these arrangements. The house on Rue de Bourbon, which she intended to present to Calyste in case her projects were successful, was then being refurnished. All three alighted, therefore, at the Hôtel de Grandlieu, where the baroness was received with all the distinction due to the name she bore before marriage as well as to her husband's name.

Mademoiselle des Touches, in the most natural way, advised Calyste to see the sights of Paris while she was trying to ascertain where Béatrix was at that moment, and she abandoned him to the seductions of every sort that awaited him there. The duchess, her daughters and their friends did the honors of Paris to Calyste just as the holiday season was beginning. The animation of the capital afforded the young Breton ample distraction. He detected some resemblance in point of intellect between Madame de Rochefide and Sabine de Grandlieu, who was beyond question at that time one of the loveliest and most charming young women in Parisian society, and he paid more attention to her coquetries than any other woman could have obtained from him. Sabine de Grandlieu played her part the more effectively because she liked Calyste.

Affairs progressed so rapidly that, during the winter of 1837, the young Baron du Guénic, who had recovered his youthful freshness and bloom, listened with no show of repugnance when his mother reminded him of the promise made to his dying father, and suggested his marriage to Sabine de Grandlieu. But, although he acknowledged his promise, he concealed a secret indifference which the baroness understood, and which would, she hoped, be done away with as a result of the joys of married life.

On the day when the Grandlieu family and the baroness, accompanied on this occasion by her relatives from England, sat in conclave in the grand salon of the Hôtel de Grandlieu, while Léopold Hannequin, the family notary, explained the contract before reading it, Calyste, whose brow was somewhat clouded, flatly refused to accept Mademoiselle des Touches' benefactions; he still relied upon her devotion and believed her to be engaged in the search for Béatrix. At that moment, amid the stupefied silence of both families, Sabine entered, dressed in such a way, although she was very dark, as to remind Calyste of the Marquise de Rochefide, and handed him the following letter:

CAMILLE TO CALYSTE

"Before I enter my novice's cell, Calyste, I am permitted to cast one last glance upon the world I am about to leave, to enter upon the world of prayer.

That glance is entirely for you, who, in these last months, have been all the world to me. My voice will reach you, if I have not erred in my calculations, in the midst of a ceremony at which it was impossible for me to assist. On the day that you stand before the altar, bestowing your hand upon a young and charming girl who can love you openly in the face of heaven and earth, I too shall be standing before an altar, in a convent at Nantes, but betrothed forever to Him who never deceives or betrays. I write this not to sadden you, but to beg you to allow no false delicacy to interfere with what I have intended to do for you ever since I first saw you. Do not dispute my dearly won right. If love is suffering, indeed I have loved you well, Calyste; but have no remorse; the only real pleasure I have enjoyed in my whole life I owe to you, and the sorrows have come from myself. Reward me, therefore, for all my past sorrow by giving me cause for everlasting joy. Permit poor Camille, who is no more, to count for something in the material happiness you will enjoy every day. Permit me, my dear, to be, as it were, a perfume in the flowers of your life, to be mingled with it forever without being obnoxious to you. I shall owe to you, beyond question, the bliss of life everlasting; are you not willing that I should pay my debt by the gift of a little paltry wealth? Do you lack generosity? Do you not see in this act the last falsehood of love disdained? The world without you was nothing to me, Calyste; you have made it the

most ghastly of solitudes to me, and you have brought Camille Maupin, the sceptic, the author of books and plays which I propose solemnly to disavow, you have tossed that bold, perverse creature, bound hand and foot, at God's feet. I am to-day what I should always have been, an innocent child. Yes, I have washed my robe in the tears of repentance, and I shall go before the altar, endorsed by an angel, by my beloved Calyste! With what joy do I call you by that name which my resolution has sanctified! I love you from no selfish motive, as a mother loves her son, as the Church loves its children. I can pray for you and yours, with no admixture of any other desire than a desire for your happiness. If you knew the sublime tranquillity of my present life, since I have risen in thought far above all petty worldly interests, and how sweet is the consciousness of having done one's duty, according to your noble device,—you would enter with firm step into the happy life that awaits you, without a glance behind or about you! I write you therefore more especially to entreat you to be faithful to yourself and your friends. My dear, the society in which your life is to be passed could not exist without the religion of duty, and you would slight it, as I slighted it, by abandoning yourself to passion and caprice, as I did. Woman is equal to man only when she makes of her life a constant sacrifice, as man's life is perpetual action. But my life has been one long carnival of selfishness. And so it may be that God placed you at my gate, toward

evening, as a messenger commissioned to punish and to pardon me. Listen to this confession from a woman to whom glory has been like a beacon light whose beams pointed out to her the true path. Be great, sacrifice your fantasy to your duties as head of a family, as husband and father! Raise the lowered banner of the Du Guénics, exhibit, in this unbelieving, unprincipled age, the nobleman of old time in all his glory and all his splendor. Dear child of my heart, let me play the part of a mother somewhat; the adorable Fanny will not be jealous of a woman dead to the world, of whom henceforth you will see naught but the hands raised in prayer to Heaven. To-day the nobility is more than ever in need of resources; therefore accept a part of mine, Calyste, and make a worthy use of it. It is not a gift, it is a trust. I have thought more of your children and your old Breton family than of yourself, in offering you the profit that time has brought me upon my property in Paris."

"Let us sign," said the young man, to the unbounded satisfaction of the assemblage.

PART THIRD

RETROSPECTIVE INFIDELITY

*

The following week, after the wedding mass, which, according to the custom that prevails among certain families in Faubourg Saint-Germain, was celebrated at seven in the morning at the church of Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, Calyste and Sabine entered a pretty traveling carriage amid the embraces and good wishes and tears of a score of persons assembled under the awning at the Hôtel de Grandlieu. The good wishes proceeded from the four witnesses and the men, the tears stood in the eyes of the Duchesse de Grandlieu and her daughter Clotilde, both of whom were agitated by the same anxious thought.

"Poor Sabine! she has started out in life at the mercy of a man who has not acted altogether of his own free will."

Marriage does not consist entirely of pleasure, which is as fleeting in that state as in every other; it implies compatibility of temper, physical sympathies, harmony of character, which make of this

c ity ding problem. Marriage-
their mothers the condi-
s d risks th tery; that is why women
p ddi men smile; the men be-
t a riski n thing, the women know
alm ly w isk. In another carriage,
couple, was the Baronne
énic, to uchess had said a moment

"You are a mother, although you have had but one son; try to take my place with my dear Sabine!"

On the box seat of t carriage was a chasseur acting as a courier, and n the raised seat behind were two maids. The four postilions—for each carriage was drawn by four horses—were dressed in their finest uniforms; they all wore flowers at their buttonholes and ribbons in their hats, which the Duc de Grandlieu had the greatest difficulty in inducing them to remove, even by paying them to do it. The French postilion is eminently intelligent, but he must have his little joke; they took the money and at the barrier donned their ribbons again.

"Adieu, Sabine!" said the duchess; "remember your promise, and write often.—Calyste, I will say nothing more to you, but you understand me!"

Clotilde, leaning upon her youngest sister, Athénaïs, upon whom Vicomte Juste de Grandlieu was smiling sweetly, gazed earnestly at the bride through her tears, and followed the carriage with

her eyes until it disappeared amid the repeated cracking of four whips, which made more noise than pistol shots. In a few seconds, the procession reached the Esplanade des Invalides, traversed the Quai and crossed the Pont d'Iéna, to the Barrière de Passy, and drove along the Versailles road to the high road to Bretagne.

Is it not strange, to say the least, that the mechanics of Switzerland and Germany and the great families of France and England follow the same custom of taking a journey after the wedding ceremony? The grandees make themselves comfortable in a rolling box. The plebeians travel gayly along the roads, halt in the woods, feast at all the inns, as long as their holiday, or rather their money, lasts. The moralist would be sorely embarrassed to decide which is the more attractive form of modesty; that which hides from the public gaze, inaugurating the domestic fireside and the marriage bed at once as do good bourgeois folk, or that which hides from the family, exhibiting itself in broad daylight, on the high road, to the gaze of strangers. Refined souls should desire solitude and avoid the world and the family alike. The swift passion which begins married life is a diamond, a pearl, a jewel carved by the first of artists, a treasure to be buried at the bottom of the heart.

Who can describe a honeymoon unless it be the bride? And how many women realize that that season of uncertain duration—there are those that last but a single night!—is the preface to conjugal life?

Sabine's first three letters to her mother betrayed a condition of affairs which, unfortunately, will not seem strange to some young brides and to many old women. All those who find themselves in the position of nurse of a heart, so to speak, do not discover it at once, as Sabine did. But the young girls of Faubourg Saint-Germain, when they are intellectually clever, are already women so far as their brains are concerned. Before marriage, they have received the baptism of good manners from the world and from their mothers. Duchesses, eager to hand down their own traditions, often do not realize the full bearing of their lessons when they say to their daughters: "Such and such a gesture is not in good taste.—Don't laugh at that.—We don't throw ourselves on a couch, but fall gracefully upon it.—Give up that horrible trick of yours!—You mustn't do that, my dear," etc., etc.

Because of such precepts, bourgeois critics have denied the possession of innocence and virtue to young girls who, like Sabine, are simply virgins made perfect by intellect, by familiarity with grand manners and by good taste; and who, from the age of sixteen, know how to make the most of their figures. Sabine, in order to have entered into the plan formed by Mademoiselle des Touches to give her a husband, must have belonged to the school of Mademoiselle de Chaulieu. This innate shrewdness, these bequests of race will perhaps make this young woman as interesting as the heroine of the *Memoirs of Two Young Wives*, when we discern the

uselessness of these social advantages in the great crises of married life, in which they are often crushed beneath the twofold weight of misfortune and passion.

I

TO MADAME LA DUCHESSE DE GRANDLIEU

"Guérande, April, 1838.

"DEAR MOTHER:

"You will understand why I didn't write to you *en voyage*, for our minds at such times are like wheels. Here I have been for two days, in the heart of Bretagne, at the Hôtel du Guénic, a house decorated like a box of cocoanut wood. Notwithstanding the affectionate attentions of Calyste's family, I feel an ardent longing to fly away to you and tell you a multitude of those things which, I feel instinctively, can be entrusted only to a mother. Calyste married, dear mamma, with a great sorrow still alive in his heart; we all knew it, and you did not conceal from me the difficulties that lay in my path; but alas! they are greater than you supposed. Ah! dear mamma, what an amount of experience we acquire in a few days, why should I not say in a few hours? All your suggestions have proved useless, and you will understand why from this single sentence: I love Calyste as if he were not my husband. That is to say, if I were married to another man I would go with Calyste, I would love

him and hate my husband. Assume therefore a man loved utterly, involuntarily, absolutely, to say nothing of all the other adverbs you may choose to add. Thus my servitude is an established fact, despite your good advice. You bade me maintain a noble, dignified and proud demeanor, in order to compel from Calyste sentiments that would be subject to no change in our circumstances: the esteem, the consideration which should sanctify a woman in the bosom of her family. You raised your voice, justly I have no doubt, against the young women of to-day, who, under the pretext of living on good terms with their husbands, begin with easy-going complaisance, good-humor, familiarity and a free and easy bearing, which are, so you said, a little too *courtesan-like*—a word which I confess I do not yet understand, but we shall see later—and which, if I am to take your word, are so many relay stations to enable one to arrive rapidly at indifference, and perhaps contempt.

"'Remember that you're a Grandlieu!' you whispered in my ear.

"These suggestions, overflowing with the maternal eloquence of Dædalus, had the fate of all mythological things. My dear, dear mother, could you imagine that I should begin with the same catastrophe that, according to you, concludes the honeymoon of most young women of the present day?

"When Calyste and I found ourselves alone in the carriage, we were equally idiotic in our behavior, realizing all the importance of a first word, a first

look, and each of us, abashed by the sacramental words, stared out of the window. It was so absurd that, as we approached the barrier, monsieur, in a rather uncertain voice, delivered a speech,—prepared beforehand no doubt, like all improvisations, —to which I listened with wildly beating heart, and of which I take the liberty of giving you an abstract.

"'My dear Sabine, I wish you to be happy and above all things, I wish you to be happy in your own way,' he said. 'And so, in our present situation, instead of mutually deceiving each other as to our characters and our sentiments by well-meant complaisance, let us both be what we should be a few years hence. Imagine that you have a brother in me, as I propose to see a sister in you.'

"Although it was not lacking in delicacy, I found nothing in this first speech inspired by conjugal affection, which responded to the yearnings of my heart, and I maintained my pensive demeanor after replying that I was actuated by the same sentiments. Upon this declaration of our right to be cold to each other, we talked about the weather, the dust, the relays and the landscape, as sweetly as you can imagine, I, laughing a forced laugh, he, very thoughtful.

"At last, as we drove out of Versailles, I asked Calyste frankly—I called him *my dear Calyste* as he called me *my dear Sabine*—if he could tell me the story of the events that had brought him within two fingers' breadth of death, and to which I knew that

I owed the good-fortune to be his wife. He hesitated for a long time. It was the subject of a little discussion between us that lasted during three relays, I, trying to pose as a self-willed damsel, determined to be sulky; he, meditating upon the fatal question propounded by the newspapers to Charles X. like a challenge: *Will the king yield?* At last, after we had changed horses at Verneuil and I had taken oaths enough to satisfy three dynasties, never to reproach him with his madness, not to treat him coldly, etc., he described his passion for Madame de Rochefide.

"'I do not wish that there should be any secrets between us,' he said, as he concluded.

"Doesn't poor, dear Calyste know, I wonder, that both his friend Mademoiselle des Touches and you were obliged to tell me everything, for a young woman of my disposition doesn't put on her costume the day of the signing of the contract without being thoroughly posted as to her rôle. One should confess everything to such an affectionate mother as you are to me, and I must say that I was deeply wounded when I saw that he had yielded much less to my wish than to his own longing to talk of that strange passion. Do you blame me, dearest mother, for having determined to discover the extent of his disappointment, the depth of that painful wound in the heart of which you told me? So it was that, a week after the conjugal benediction was pronounced by the curé of Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, your Sabine found herself in the decidedly false position of a

young wife listening to the story of a thwarted love, and the transgressions of a rival, from her husband's own lips! Yes, my part in the drama was that of a young wife learning officially that she owed her marriage to the disdain of an elderly blonde. As the result of that narrative I gained what I sought! 'What?' you will ask. Ah! dear mother, I have seen enough Loves following one another about upon clocks and mantelpiece columns to put my knowledge in practice! Calyste terminated the poem of his reminiscences with a most earnest asseveration that he has entirely forgotten what he calls his madness. Every declaration requires a signature. The happy wretch took my hand, put it to his lips and kept it between his hands a long while. A declaration followed. That one seemed to me more consistent with our civil status than the former one, although our mouths did not utter a single word. I owe this good fortune to my righteous indignation at the wretched taste of a woman so idiotic as not to have loved my handsome, my fascinating Calyste—

"I am summoned to play a game of cards which I haven't yet learned. I will go on to-morrow. To be obliged to leave you at such a time, to make a fifth at a game of *mouche*—such a thing would not be possible except in the wilds of Bretagne!

"May.

"I resume the thread of my Odyssey. The third day your children laid aside the ceremonious *you* for

the lovers' *thou*. My mother-in-law, overjoyed to see us so happy together, has tried to put herself in your place, and dear mother, as always happens with those who play a part actuated by the desire to efface reminiscences, she has been so lovely that she has been almost like you to me. She has divined the heroism of my conduct, I have no doubt, for, at the beginning of the journey, she concealed her uneasiness too carefully not to make it apparent by the very excess of her precautions.

"When I saw the towers of Guérande rising before me, I said in your son-in-law's ear:

" 'Have you really forgotten her?'

"My husband, who has become *my angel*, evidently knows nothing of the boundless wealth of sincere and unaffected attachment, for that little phrase made him almost mad with joy. Unfortunately, the desire to make him forget Madame de Rochefide carried me too far. But what would you have? I am in love, and I am almost a Portuguese, for I resemble you more than I do my father. Calyste accepted everything from me, as spoiled children do—he is an only son, you know. Between ourselves, I will never give my daughter, if I have a daughter, to an only son. It is bad enough to put yourself in the hands of a tyrant, and I see tyrants of several sorts in an only son. Thus, you see, we have exchanged rôles; I have borne myself like a devoted wife. There are risks in a devotion of which one takes advantage; you may lose your dignity therein. I announce to

you therefore the shipwreck of that semi-virtue. Dignity is only a screen set up by pride, behind which we rave and fume at our ease. What do you expect, mamma!—you were not here, I found myself standing on the brink of a precipice. If I had clung to my dignity, I should have had the freezing pain of a sort of brotherly affection which would inevitably have become indifference pure and simple. And what sort of a future should I have laid up for myself! My devotion has resulted in making me Calyste's slave. Shall I retreat from this situation? We will see; for the present, I enjoy it. I love Calyste, I love him absolutely, with the intense affection of a mother who approves whatever her son does, even when she is treated a little harshly by him.

"15th May.

"Thus far, dear mamma, marriage has appeared to me in most charming guise. I am lavishing all my affection upon the dearest of men, whom a fool cast aside for a paltry musician—for that woman is evidently a fool and a cold-blooded fool, which is the very worst variety of fool. I am charitable in my legitimate passion—I cure wounds by making for myself incurable ones. Yes, the more dearly I love Calyste, the more certain I feel that I should die of grief if our present happiness should cease. Moreover, I am an object of adoration to the whole family and the little circle of friends who assemble at the Hôtel du Guénic,—all of them personages born in high warp tapestries, who have stepped out from

them to prove that the impossible exists. Some day when I am alone, I will describe my Aunt Zéphirine to you, and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, the Chevalier du Halga, Mesdemoiselles de Kergarouët, etc. Everyone, even to the two servants, Gasselin and Mariotte, whom I hope to be permitted to bring with me to Paris, and who look upon me as an angel descended from her place in Heaven, and start whenever I speak to them—everyone, I say, is a figure fit to be put under glass.

"My mother-in-law has solemnly installed us in the apartments formerly occupied by herself and her late husband. It was a touching scene.

" 'I lived happily in these rooms all my married life,' she said to us; 'may that fact be of happy omen for you, my dear children!'

"She took Calyste's room for herself. The saintly creature seemed determined to deprive herself of the memories of her own beautiful conjugal life in order to invest us with them. The province of Bretagne, this town, this old-fashioned family, notwithstanding the absurdities which exist only in the eyes of us mocking Parisians, have an inexplicable grandeur in the most trifling details of their existence which can be described only by the word *sacred.* All the tenants on the vast domains of the Du Guénic family, which were redeemed, you know, by Mademoiselle des Touches, whom we are going to visit at her convent, came in a body to welcome us. The good people, in holiday attire, all expressing the liveliest satisfaction to know that Calyste

was once more really their master, gave me a vivid idea of Bretagne, of the feudal system and of old France. It was an occasion which I will not try to describe to you in a letter; I will tell you about it. The terms of all the leases are proposed by these *gars* themselves and we shall sign them after the inspection we shall soon make of *our* estates, which have been in pawn for a hundred and fifty years past!—Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël told us that the *gars* had accounted for the income with an accuracy that Parisian business men would refuse to credit. We shall set out three days hence, and travel on horseback. I will write you when we return, dear mother; but what can I say to you then, if my happiness is at its height now? I will write you what you already know—how dearly I love you."

II

THE SAME TO THE SAME

"Nantes, June.

"After playing the part of a chatelaine adored by her vassals, as if the Revolutions of 1789 and 1830 had trailed no banners in the dust; after riding-parties in the forest, halts at farmhouses, dinners upon ancient tables and linen centuries old, bending under Homeric dishes served in antediluvian plate; after drinking exquisite wines in such goblets as sleight-of-hand performers use, with salvos of musketry at dessert! and cries of *Vivent les Du*

Guénic! to deafen one! and balls at which the orchestra consists of one *biniou*, into which a man blows ten hours at a stretch! and bouquets! and young brides who come to ask our blessing! and wholesome fatigue, the remedy for which is found in bed in such sleep as I knew nothing of, and delicious dreams in which love is as radiant as the sun that shines upon you and sparkles upon innumerable flies buzzing in low Breton!—and, lastly, after a most entertaining sojourn at the Château du Guénic,—where the windows are porte-cochères and where the cows might graze upon the grass that grows in the great halls, but which we have sworn to restore and put in order, intending to come here every year amid the acclamations of the *gars* of the Clan du Guénic, one of whom will bear our banner, —presto! here I am at Nantes!

"Ah! what a day was that of our arrival at Le Guénic! The rector came with all his clergy, all crowned with flowers, to welcome us and bless us, mother, expressing such joy!—the tears come to my eyes as I write of it. And dear, proud Calyste played his part as seigneur, like one of Sir Walter Scott's characters. Monsieur received their homage as if we were in the thirteenth century. I heard the girls and women saying:

"'What a pretty lord we have!' like the chorus in a comic opera.

"The older men discussed among themselves Calyste's resemblance to the Du Guénics whom they had known. Ah! this noble, sublime Bretagne, what

a land of faith and religion! But progress has its eye on it, roads and bridges are being built; the march of ideas will follow, and then, adieu to the sublime! The peasants will certainly never be so free or so proud as I have seen them, after it has been proved to them that they are Calyste's equals, if indeed they can be induced to believe it. After the conclusion of the poem of this pacific restoration and the signing of the contracts, we left that fascinating country, always bright with flowers, and gay, depressing and desolate by turns, and came here to kneel at the feet of her to whom we owe our happiness. Calyste and I both felt that we must express our gratitude to the Sister of the Convent of the Visitation. In memory of her, he will quarter his arms with those of the Des Touches, which are: *parti coupé, tranché, taillé d'or et de sinople.* He will take one of the silver eagles for one of his supporters, and will put in its beak the appropriate woman's motto: *Remember!*

"Well, we went yesterday to the Convent of the Visitation, under the guidance of Abbé Grimont, a friend of the Du Guénic family, who told us that our dear Félicité is a saint, mamma; she cannot well be anything less than that in his eyes, as that illustrious conversion procured him the appointment of vicar-general of the diocese. Mademoiselle des Touches refused to receive Calyste and saw me alone. I found her somewhat changed, paler and thinner; she seemed to me to be very glad that I had come.

"'Tell Calyste,' she said in a low voice, 'that my refusal to see him is a matter of conscience with me, for I have been given permission; but I prefer not to purchase a few moments' joy by months of suffering. Ah! if you knew how hard it is for me to reply when I am asked: "What are you thinking about?" The mistress of the novices cannot understand the extent and number of the thoughts that pass through my head like whirlwinds. At times I seem to see Italy again and Paris, with all their wonderful sights, when I think of Calyste, who,' she said in that beautiful, poetic vein, which you remember, 'is the sun of my memory.—I was too old to be received at the Carmelites and I joined the order of Saint François de Sales simply because it was he who said: "I will uncover your heads instead of uncovering your feet!" refusing his sanction to the harsh penances that shatter the body. It is, in truth, the head that sins. The saintly bishop did well, therefore, to make his regulations severe upon the intelligence, and terribly effective in curbing the will!—That is what I desired, for my head is the real culprit; it deceived me concerning my heart, up to the fatal age of forty, at which, although one may be for a few minutes forty times happier than young women, one is sure to be later fifty times unhappier than they.—Well, my child, are you satisfied?' she asked me, with visible relief at ceasing to speak of herself.

"'You see me in the enchantment stage of love and happiness,' I replied.

FROM SABINE TO HER MOTHER

"*After playing the part of a chatelaine adored by her vassals, as if the Revolutions of 1789 and 1830 had trailed no banners in the dust;* * * * *after drinking exquisite wines in such goblets as sleight-of-hand performers use, with salvos of musketry at dessert! and cries of* Vivent les Du Guénic! *to deafen one! and balls at which the orchestra consists of one* biniou, *into which a man blows ten hours at a stretch! and bouquets! and young brides who come to ask our blessing!*

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"'Calyste is as artless and kind as he is noble and handsome,' said she, gravely. 'I have made him my heir; in addition to my fortune, you possess the twofold ideal of which I dreamed.—I applaud myself for what I have done,' she continued after a pause. 'Now, my child, don't deceive yourself. You have laid hold of happiness very easily, for you had only to put out your hand, but you must think about retaining your hold upon it. If you had come here for no other purpose than to take counsel of my experience, your voyage would be amply repaid. Calyste is actuated at this moment by a passion communicated, but not inspired, by you. To make your felicity lasting, try, my dear girl, to combine the two. In the interest of both, try to be capricious, be coquettish with him and a little cruel —you must do it. I do not advise hateful scheming, nor tyranny, but skilful handling. Between miserliness and wasteful extravagance, my dear, there is economy. Strive to acquire a little real influence over Calyste by honorable means. These are the last words upon earthly matters that I shall utter; I kept them in reserve for you, for I trembled in my conscience lest I had sacrificed you to save Calyste; bind him fast to you, see that he has children and that he respects their mother in you.—Lastly,' she said, in a voice that betrayed deep emotion, 'never let him see Béatrix again!'

"That name plunged us both into a sort of torpor, and we sat gazing into each other's eyes with the same expression of vague disquietude.

"'Are you going back to Guérande?' she asked me.

"'Yes,' I said.

"'Well, never go to Les Touches. I did wrong to give you that property.'

"'Why, pray?'

"'Child! so far as you are concerned, Les Touches is Bluebeard's closet, for there is nothing more dangerous than to arouse a sleeping passion.'

"I have given you the substance of our conversation, dear mother. If Mademoiselle des Touches made me talk a great deal, her words gave me the more food for thought, because in the intoxicating excitement of the voyage and my fascination with Calyste, I had forgotten the grave moral situation of which I spoke in my first letter.

"After we had thoroughly admired Nantes—a magnificent and most attractive city—and had been to see the spot on Place Bretagne where Charette fell so nobly, we planned to return by the Loire to Saint-Nazaire, as we had already made the land journey between Nantes and Guérande. A steamboat is decidedly less comfortable than a carriage. This traveling in public is an invention of the modern monster, *Monopoly*. Two young ladies of Nantes,—very pretty, they were,—made a great commotion on deck, being afflicted with what I call *Kergarouëtism*—a little joke that you will understand when I have described the Kergarouëts. Calyste behaved very well. Like a true gentleman he didn't advertise me. Although I was satisfied with his good

taste, like a child who has just been given his first drum, it occurred to me that I had a magnificent opportunity to try the system recommended by Camille Maupin, for it certainly was not the Sister of the Visitation who gave me that advice. I assumed a sort of petulant expression and Calyste took alarm thereat very prettily. To his whispered question: 'What's the matter?' I answered truthfully: 'Nothing!'

"And thereupon I realized how little success truth obtains at first. Falsehood is a decisive weapon in emergencies when celerity of action is likely to save women and empires. Calyste became very urgent, very anxious. I led him to the bow of the boat and sat down on a pile of ropes, and there, in a voice tremulous with fear, if not with tears, I told him of the misery and dread that beset a woman whose husband is the handsomest of men.

"'Ah! Calyste,' I cried, 'there is one frightful defect in our union; you did not love me, you did not choose me! You didn't stand rooted in your place like a statue the first time you saw me! My heart, my attachment, my love solicit your affection, and some day you will punish me for bringing to you of my own motion, the treasures of my pure, involuntary, maidenly love! I ought to be cruel, coquettish, but I have no strength against you. If that horrible creature who disdained you, were here in my place, you would not have noticed those two frightful Breton women, whom the customs officers at the Paris barriers would class among cattle.'

"Calyste had tears in his eyes, mother, and he turned his head away to hide them from me; he saw that we were approaching Basse Indre, and ran to tell the captain to land us there. It is impossible to hold out against such replies, especially when accompanied by a sojourn of three hours in a wretched inn of Basse Indre, where we breakfasted on fresh fish in a small room such as *genre* painters love to paint, and listened to the hum of the forges of Indret across the beautiful waters of the Loire. As I saw the result of the experiences of Experience, I cried:

"'Ah! sweet Félicité—'

"Incapable as he was of suspecting the nun's advice to me and the duplicity of my conduct, Calyste made a divine play upon words; he cut me short with:

"'Let us not lose the memory of it! We will send an artist to copy this scene.'

"I laughed, dear mamma, to throw Calyste off the scent, and I saw that he was almost angry with me.

"'Why,' I said, 'this landscape, this scene is ineffaceably engraved upon my heart in colors that no painter can equal!'

"Ah! mother, it is impossible for me to assume the appearance of war or hostility in my love. Calyste will do whatever he pleases with me. That tear was the first, I think, he ever bestowed upon me: is it not of more value than the second declaration of our mutual privileges?—A heartless woman would have become queen and mistress after

the scene on the boat, but I threw away my opportunities again. According to your theory, the older I grow the more of a *courtesan* I become, for I am a woeful coward where happiness is concerned, and I cannot resist a glance from my lord. No! I do not abandon myself to love, but I cling to it as a mother strains her infant to her breast when she fears some disaster."

III

THE SAME TO THE SAME

"Guérande, July.

"Ah! dear mother, to think that I have made the acquaintance of jealousy after only three months! My heart is very full, for it contains profound hatred and profound love! I am worse than betrayed, I am not loved!—How fortunate I am to have a mother, a heart into which I can pour my lamentations as I please! We wives who are still young girls to a certain extent, need nothing more than to have some one say to us: 'There is one key rusty with memories among all the keys of your palace; go where you please, enjoy everything you see, but beware of going to Les Touches!' nothing more than that is necessary to send us there hot-footed, our eyes blazing with the curiosity of Eve. What an irritating quality Mademoiselle des Touches had introduced into my love! But why did she forbid me to go to Les Touches? What is

such happiness as mine that it should depend upon a walk, upon a visit to a Bretagne hovel? And what have I to fear? In a word, add to Madame Bluebeard's arguments the desire that consumes all wives to find whether their happiness rests upon a precarious or a solid foundation, and you will understand how it came about that I asked one day, with an indifferent air:

"'What sort of a place is Les Touches?'

"'Les Touches is yours,' said my adorable mother-in-law.

"'If only Calyste had never set foot in Les Touches!' cried Aunt Zéphirine, shaking her head.

"'Why, then he wouldn't be my husband,' I said to her.

"'Do you know what happened there?' inquired my mother-in-law with interest.

"'It's a place of perdition,' said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël; 'Mademoiselle des Touches committed many sins there for which she is now seeking God's forgiveness.'

"'Didn't it save that noble creature's soul, and make the fortune of a convent?' cried the Chevalier du Halga. 'Abbé Grimont told me that she gave the Sisters of the Visitation a hundred thousand francs.'

"'Would you like to go to Les Touches?' my mother-in-law asked. 'It is well worth the trouble of a visit.'

"'No, no!' I said, hastily.

"Doesn't this little scene seem to you like a page

from some diabolical drama? It was renewed upon a score of occasions. At last my mother-in-law said to me:

"'I understand why you don't want to go to Les Touches, and you are quite right.'

"Ah! mother, you will agree that that dagger-thrust, unwittingly dealt, would have persuaded you to ascertain if your happiness rested upon such insecure foundations that it was likely to perish under this or that decorated roof. I must do Calyste the justice to say that he never suggested to me to visit that country house which had so recently become his own. We become devoid of common-sense as soon as we fall in love; for his silence, his reserve offended me, and I said to him one day:

"'What is it that you are afraid of seeing at Les Touches, pray, that only you avoid speaking of the place?'

"'Let us go there,' he said.

"Thereupon I was caught like all women who want to be caught, and who leave it to chance to cut the Gordian knot of their indecision. We went to Les Touches.

"It is a delightful place, arranged and furnished most artistically and in the best of taste, and I was enchanted with the yawning abyss which Mademoiselle des Touches had so earnestly forbidden me to approach. All poisonous flowers are charming; Satan sows them, for there are flowers of Satan and flowers of God! we have only to search our own hearts to realize that each of them created half of

the world. What painful pleasure there was in my position, where I was playing, not with fire, but with ashes!—I watched Calyste closely, for it was my purpose to discover whether the flame was really extinct, and I kept my eye on the currents of air, you may believe! I watched his face as we went from room to room, from chair to chair, exactly like children hunting for a hidden object. Calyste seemed very thoughtful but I thought at first that I had won. I felt strong enough in my position to speak of Madame de Rochefide, who, since the adventure of the cliff at Le Croisic, is spoken of as *Rocheperfide*. At last, we went to see the famous box-bush on which Béatrix caught when he pushed her into the sea so that she should belong to no one else.

"'She must be very light if that held her,' I remarked, laughingly.

"Calyste said nothing.

"'Let us respect the dead,' I continued.

"Still Calyste was silent.

"'Have I offended you?'

"'No, but do not galvanize that passion,' he said.

"What a thing to say!—When Calyste saw that I was depressed, he redoubled his affectionate attentions.

"August.

"I was at the bottom of the abyss, alas! and I amused myself plucking the flowers that grow there, as injured innocence does in all melodramas.

Suddenly a horrible thought rode roughshod through my happiness, like the horse in the German ballad. I fancied that I could see that Calyste's passion was increased by his memories, and that he threw upon me the storms that I reawakened in his breast by recalling the coquetries of that vile Béatrix! That unhealthy, cold, persistent, flabby nature, which resembles the mollusk and the coral at once, dares to call itself Béatrix!—So there I was, my dear mother, compelled already to keep my eye upon a suspicion when my heart is all Calyste's; and is it not a dire catastrophe that the eye should triumph over the heart, that the suspicion should at last be justified? This is how it happened.

" 'This place is very dear to me,' I said to Calyste one morning, 'for to it I owe my happiness, so I forgive you for sometimes mistaking me for another—'

"The loyal Breton blushed, whereupon I leaped upon his neck; but I left Les Touches and I will never go there again.

"By the bitter hate which makes me long for Madame de Rochefide's death—from natural causes, of course, a hemorrhage or an accident of some sort—I realize the extent and the power of my love for Calyste. That woman disturbs my sleep, I see her in my dreams; am I destined to meet her, I wonder? —Ah! the Sister of the Visitation was right: Les Touches is a fatal spot, Calyste's impressions were aroused anew there and they are stronger than the joys of our love. Find out for me, my dear mother, if Madame de Rochefide is at Paris, for if she is, I

shall stay on our estates in Bretagne. Poor Mademoiselle des Touches is sorry now that she made me dress like Béatrix on the day the contract was signed, in order to ensure the success of her plan; what would she say if she knew how far I have been taken for our detestable rival? Why, it is downright prostitution! I am not myself; I am ashamed. I am oppressed by a mad longing to fly from Guérande and the sands of Le Croisic.

"25th August.

"I am determined to return to the ruins of Le Guénic. Calyste, who is very much troubled over my trouble, is to take me there. Either he has no suspicion of the truth, in which case he knows very little of the world, or, if he knows the cause of my flight, he does not care for me. I tremble so lest I arrive at ghastly certainty, if I investigate, that I simply put my hands over my eyes, as children do to avoid hearing a report. Oh! mother dear, I am not loved with the same love that I feel in my heart. Calyste is charming, to be sure; but what man, unless he were a monster, could fail to be as amiable and gracious as Calyste when he receives all the flowers that bloom in the heart of a girl of twenty, brought up by you, pure and loving as I am, and said by many women to be beautiful—

"Le Guénic, 18th September.

"Has he forgotten her? That is the one thought that echoes remorsefully in my heart! Ah! dear

mamma, do all wives have memories to contend against, as I have? Only innocent young men should be married to pure young girls! But it is a deceptive Utopia; it is much better to have one's rival in the past than in the future. Oh! pity me, mother, although at this moment I am happy—as happy as a woman can be who is afraid of losing her happiness and clings to it for dear life!—That is one way of destroying it, the profound Clotilde once said.

"I notice that, for five months past, I have thought only of myself, that is, of Calyste. Tell my sister Clotilde that her melancholy words of wisdom often recur to my mind; she is very fortunate in being faithful to a dead man, for she has no rival to fear. I embrace dear Athénaïs; I see that Juste is mad from love of her. From what you tell me in your last letter, he seems to fear that you won't give her to him. Cultivate that fear like a precious flower. Athénaïs will be the mistress, and I, who trembled with apprehension because I did not obtain Calyste from his own heart, shall be the servant. A thousand kisses, dear mamma. Ah! if my terrors should prove to be well founded, I shall have paid dearly for Camille Maupin's fortune.—My affectionate respects to my father."

*

These letters explain perfectly the real situation of the husband and wife. Whereas Sabine looked forward to a marriage of love, Calyste saw only a marriage of convenience. In fact, the joys of the honeymoon were not altogether in accord with the legal theory of the community of goods.

During the residence of the young couple in Bretagne, the work of restoring, rearranging and refurnishing the Hôtel du Guénic on Rue de Bourbon, was hurried forward by the famous architect Grindot, under the superintendence of the Duc and Duchesse de Grandlieu and Clotilde. All arrangements having been made for the return of the youthful couple to Paris in December, 1838, Sabine took up her abode on Rue de Bourbon with pleasure, not so much at the thought of playing the rôle of mistress of the household as at the prospect of ascertaining the family judgment concerning her marriage. Calyste, the picture of comely indifference, gladly placed himself under the guidance, in social matters, of his sister-in-law Clotilde and his mother-in-law, who were grateful to him for his passive submission. He obtained the place in society due to his name, his fortune and his marriage. The success of his wife, who was considered one of the most charming of women, the distractions of fashionable society, duties to fulfil, and the amusements in vogue in

Paris in winter, restored a little vigor to the well-being of the household, by introducing therein stimulants and media at the same time. Sabine, whom her mother and sister, seeing in Calyste's coldness the result of his English education, considered most fortunate, laid aside her gloomy thoughts; she heard so many mismated young women envying her lot that she banished her terrors to the land of chimeras.

At last, Sabine's pregnancy completed the guaranties afforded by this union of the neuter gender, so to speak,—one of the sort from which many experienced women augur good results. In October, 1839, the young Baronne du Guénic gave birth to a boy and was guilty of the folly, as women under such circumstances consider it, of nursing him. How can a woman fail to perform the whole duty of a mother, when she has a son by a husband whom she absolutely idolizes?

Toward the end of the following summer, in August, 1840, Sabine was approaching the time for weaning her first child. During a residence of two years in Paris, Calyste had altogether emerged from the state of innocence, whose prestige had embellished his early appearances in the world of passion. He had become intimate with the young Duc Georges de Maufrigneuse, like himself, recently married to an heiress, Berthe de Cinq-Cygne; with Vicomte Savinien de Portenduère, with the Duc and Duchesse de Rhétoré, the Duc and Duchesse de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu, and all the habitués of his

mother-in-law's salon, and he appreciated the difference between life in the provinces and life at Paris. Wealth has its gloomy, dull moments, which Paris can do more than any other capital to entertain, to charm, to interest. By contact with these young husbands who leave the noblest, loveliest creatures for the delights of tobacco and whist, for the exalted conversation of the club or the preoccupations of the *turf*, many of the domestic virtues possessed by the young Breton nobleman were assailed. The maternal yearning of a wife who is anxious not to weary her husband always comes to the aid of the dissipation of youthful bridegrooms. A woman is so proud to see a man return to her when she has left him perfectly free!

One evening, in October of that year, to avoid the shrieks of an infant in process of being weaned, Calyste, upon whose brow Sabine could not, without a pang, see the wrinkles gather, went, by her advice, to the *Variétés*, where a new play was being given.

The footman who was sent to purchase an orchestra stall selected one very near that part of the theatre called the proscenium. During the first intermission Calyste, upon looking about him, saw Madame de Rochefide in one of the proscenium boxes on the first tier, within four paces of him.

Béatrix in Paris! Béatrix in public! those two thoughts passed through Calyste's heart like two arrows. To see her again after well-nigh three years! How can we explain the general upheaval

that takes place in a lover's heart, when, instead of forgetting, he had sometimes made it so evident that he had married his Béatrix in his wife's person, that his wife had noticed it! By what can we explain the fact that the poem of a lost, unappreciated passion, but a passion that was still alive in the heart of Sabine's husband, rendered the young wife's conjugal devotion and ineffable affection obscure therein? Béatrix at once became light, sun, impulse, life and mystery; while Sabine was duty, darkness, familiarity. In an instant, the one was pleasure, the other ennui. It was a thunderclap.

In his loyalty, Sabine's husband conceived the noble purpose of leaving the theatre. As he left the stalls, he saw that the door of her box was partly open, and his feet carried him thither in defiance of his will. The young Breton found Béatrix sitting between two of the most distinguished men of the time, Canalis and Nathan, a politician and a man of letters. In the three years since Calyste last saw her, Madame de Rochefide had changed tremendously; but, although her metamorphosis would have impressed a woman, it made her the more attractive and poetic in Calyste's eyes. Up to the age of thirty, pretty women in Paris require nothing but clothes for their toilet; but, when they pass beneath the fatal porch of the thirtieth year, they seek weapons, fascinations, embellishment in the way of finery; they manufacture charms, they resort to all sorts of expedients, they adopt a certain tone, they make themselves younger, they make a

study of the most trifling accessories,—in a word, they pass from nature to art.

Madame de Rochefide had undergone the transformation described in the drama which, in this history of French morals in the nineteenth century, is called *The Deserted Mistress.* After being deserted by Conti, she had naturally become a great artist in the matter of toilets, of flirtation and of artificial flowers of all sorts.

"How does it happen that Conti isn't here?" Calyste asked Canalis in a low tone, after exchanging the usual trite salutations with which the most solemn interviews begin when they take place in public.

The former great poet of Faubourg Saint-Germain, twice minister and lately become for the fourth time an orator aspiring to a post in some new ministry, significantly placed his finger on his lips. This gesture explained everything.

"I am very glad to see you," said Béatrix with a feline smile to Calyste. "I said to myself as I saw you sitting there, before you saw me, that you certainly would not deny me!—Ah! my Calyste, why did you marry?" she whispered; "and such a little fool, too!"

As soon as a woman begins to whisper to a new arrival in her box and bid him sit beside her, men of the world always invent a pretext for leaving her alone with him.

"Are you coming, Nathan?" said Canalis.—"Madame la Marquise will allow me to go and say a

word to D'Arthez, whom I see with the Princesse de Cadignan; I have to perfect arrangements for speaking at the session of the Chamber to-morrow."

Their timely departure allowed Calyste to recover from the shock he had experienced; but he completely lost his strength and his wits when he inhaled the perfume, fascinating although poisonous to him, of the poem Béatrix had made of herself. Madame de Rochefide had become bony and angular, her complexion was almost gone, she was thin and withered and had dark circles around her eyes; but she had that evening embellished her premature ruins with the most ingenious conceptions of the *Article Paris*. It had occurred to her, as it does to all deserted women, to assume a virginal air, recalling, by dint of a cloud of fluffy white materials, Ossian's damsels ending in *a*, whom Girodet has painted so artistically. Her light hair enveloped her long face in billows of curls in which the rays of light from the footlights glistened, attracted by the lustre of perfumed oil. Her pale brow shone. She had applied the faintest touch of rouge to her cheeks, and the artificial brilliancy deceived the eye as to the faded pallor of her complexion, freshened with bran-water. A silken scarf, so finely woven as to make one doubt if human hands could have done the work, was twisted about her neck in such a way as to diminish its length, to conceal it, and to permit only a vague glimpse of treasures cunningly set off by the corset. Her figure was a masterpiece of construction. As to her pose, a single

word will suffice; it was worth all the trouble she had taken to assume it. Her thin, roughened arms could hardly be seen beneath the artfully devised puffs of her ample sleeves. She presented that mixture of false gleams and brilliant silks, of fluffy gauze and crimped hair, of vivacity, tranquillity and restlessness, which has been named *je ne sais quoi*. Everybody knows what *je ne sais quoi* implies. It implies much wit, good taste and warmth of temperament. Béatrix was therefore a piece of scenery, with transformations and a prodigious amount of mechanism. The performance of one of those dramas in which the scenes remind one of fairyland, and which are also very skilfully dialogued, drives men who are naturally unartificial to distraction, for, by virtue of the law of contrasts, they feel an insane desire to play with the puppets. She was false but alluring, affected but agreeable, and certain men adore the women who play at seduction as they would play at a game of cards. This is the reason. Man's desire is a syllogism which reasons from this exterior cunning to secret skill in the art of pleasure. The mind says to itself, without speaking: "A woman who knows how to make herself so beautiful must have many other resources in passion." And it is true. Deserted women are the ones who love, women who preserve their attractions are the ones who know how to love. Now, although this lesson in Italian had cruelly wounded Béatrix's self-esteem, her nature was naturally too artificial for her not to take advantage of it.

"It isn't a question of loving you," she had said, a few moments before Calyste appeared; "we must keep you on your mettle when we have you in our clutches; that is the secret of the women who want to hold on to you. The dragons set to guard treasures are armed with claws and wings!"

"I will make a sonnet of your idea," Canalis replied, just as Calyste entered the box.

At a single glance Béatrix divined Calyste's frame of mind; she recognized the marks of the collar she had put upon him at Les Touches, all fresh and red. Calyste, hurt by her slur at his wife, hesitated between his dignity as a husband, the defense of Sabine, and inviting a harsh word to be cast into a heart from which so many memories exhaled, a heart he believed to be still bleeding. The marchioness noticed his hesitation; she had made that slighting remark only to ascertain how far her empire over him extended; and when she saw how weak he was, she came to his assistance and relieved him from his embarrassment. "Well, my friend, you find me alone," she said when the two courtiers had gone; "yes, alone in the world!"

"You have forgotten me, then, have you?" said Calyste.

"You!" she replied, "aren't you married? That was one among the many blows I have undergone since we last saw each other. 'Not only,' I said to myself, 'am I bereft of his love, but of a friendship which I believed to be a true Breton friendship.'

We can accustom ourselves to everything. I suffer less now, but I am not what I was. This is the first time I have opened my heart for a long while. Obliged to be proud before the indifferent, and as haughty as if I had never fallen before those who pay court to me, I had no ear, having lost my dear Félicité, into which I could whisper: 'I am suffering!' And so I may tell you now how great my anguish was when I saw you within arm's length of me, unseen by you, and how great is my joy now that I see you here by my side. Yes," she said, in answer to a gesture from Calyste, "this is almost fidelity. That's the way it is with us miserable creatures! a mere nothing, a visit, is everything to us. Ah! you loved me as I deserved to be loved by the man who amused himself by trampling upon all the treasures I lavished upon him! And, for my sins, I am unable to forget; I love, and I propose to be faithful to the past which will never return."

As she delivered this tirade, which she had improvised a hundred times before, she played with her eyes in such a way as to redouble the effect of the words, which seemed to be dragged from the very bottom of her heart by the violence of a tempest long held in check.

Calyste, instead of speaking, allowed the tears to flow that were gathering in his eyes. Béatrix took his hand and pressed it, whereat he turned as pale as death.

"Thanks, Calyste, thanks, my poor child, that is how a real friend responds to a friend's grief! We

understand each other. No, don't say a word!—you must go now, for people are looking at us, and you might grieve your wife, if anyone should happen to tell her that we had met, although in the most innocent way, with a thousand persons looking on.—Adieu; I am strong, you see!"

She wiped her eyes, performing what is called, in woman's rhetoric, an antithesis in action.

"Leave me to laugh the laugh of the damned with the indifferent creatures who entertain me," she added. "I receive artists, authors, all the people I knew at poor Camille Maupin's; she may have been right after all! To enrich the man you love, and then disappear saying: 'I am too old for him!' is to end one's life like a martyr. And it's the best way when you cannot end it as a virgin."

She began to laugh as if to do away with the melancholy impression she might have produced on her adorer.

"But," said Calyste, "where can I call on you?"

"I have gone into retirement on Rue de Courcelles, opposite Parc de Monceaux, in a small house on a par with my fortune, and I am filling my head with literature, but for myself alone, to distract me. God preserve me from the mania of literary women!—Go, go, leave me; I don't want people to talk about me, and what wouldn't they say, seeing us together? Look, Calyste, if you stay another moment, I shall weep in good earnest."

Calyste withdrew, but not until he had given Béatrix his hand and had felt for the second time the

profound, curious sensation of a double pressure full of accompanied seductive and pleasing suggestion.

"*Mon Dieu,* Sabine never succeeded in stirring my heart like this!" was the thought that assailed him in the corridor.

During the rest of the evening, the Marquise de Rochefide did not look directly at Calyste three times; but there were sidelong glances which were just so many tugs at the heartstrings to a man still entirely absorbed in his rejected first love.

When the Baron du Guénic reached his home, the splendor of his apartments made him think of the mediocre luxury of which Béatrix had spoken, and he hated his fortune because it could not belong to the fallen angel. When he learned that Sabine had long since retired, he was very happy to find that he had one night to himself to live with his emotions. He cursed the power of divination with which Sabine's love endowed her. When it happens that a man is adored by his wife, she reads his face like an open book, she is familiar with the slightest contractions of the muscles, she knows whence his tranquillity comes, she wonders as to the cause of the slightest melancholy, she tries to find out if it has to do with herself, she studies his eyes; for her, the eyes are tinged with the dominant thought, they love or they do not love. Calyste knew himself to be the object of an adoration so profound, so ingenuous, so jealous, that he doubted his ability to maintain an expression of countenance that would convey no hint of the moral change.

"What shall I do to-morrow morning?" he said to himself as he fell asleep, dreading the species of inspection Sabine was sure to undertake.

When she bade Calyste good-morning, and even sometimes during the day, Sabine was accustomed to ask him: "Do you love me still?" or: "I do not bore you, do I?"—Becoming inquiries, varied according to the nature or spirit of different women, and often resorted to, to conceal feigned or genuine mental suffering.

Tempests stir up mire that comes to the surface of the noblest and purest hearts. And so, on the following morning, Calyste, who unquestionably loved his child, jumped for joy when he learned that Sabine was trying to discover the cause of some slight convulsions that little Calyste had been having,—as she feared an attack of croup,—and that she could not leave him.

The baron alleged a matter of business as an excuse for leaving the house and to avoid having breakfast with his wife. He fled, as prisoners flee, happy to be on foot in the open air, to walk across the Pont Louis XVI. and through the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, toward a café on the boulevard where he amused himself by breakfasting *en garçon.*

What is there in love? Is nature restive under the social yoke? does nature prefer that the impulse of the life it gives should be spontaneous, untrammeled,—that it should be a headlong torrent, broken by the rocks of contradiction and coquetry, rather than a placid stream flowing tranquilly between the

banks of the mayor's office and the church? Does it act designedly when it hatches these volcanic eruptions, to which we are indebted sometimes for great men?

It would have been hard to find a young man brought up more religiously than Calyste, with purer morals, or less tainted with scepticism; and yet he was hurrying toward a woman utterly unworthy of him although a kindly, radiant chance had presented to him, in the person of the Baronne du Guénic, a young girl of truly aristocratic beauty, of a keen and refined wit, pious, loving by nature and unselfishly attached to him, of angelic sweetness of disposition, made even sweeter by her knowledge of the love, the passionate love, despite his marriage, that he felt for Béatrix.

The greatest men seem to have retained a little clay in their composition—filth still has attractions for them. Woman therefore would seem to be the less imperfect being, notwithstanding her faults and her unreasonableness. Nevertheless, Madame de Rochefide, amid the procession of poetic pretensions that encompassed her, and despite her fall, belonged to the highest nobility; her nature was more ethereal than low, and concealed the courtesan that she proposed to be beneath a most aristocratic exterior. Therefore this explanation would not account for Calyste's strange passion. Perhaps its motive may be found in a vanity so deeply buried that moralists have not yet discovered this side of vice. There are men filled with noble qualities like

Calyste, handsome like Calyste, rich and distinguished, well-bred, who tire themselves out, perhaps without knowing it, by marriage with a nature similar to their own; persons whose nobility is not astonished at nobility in others, whose tranquillity is undisturbed by grandeur and refinement equal to their own, and who seek in inferior or fallen natures the sanction of their superiority, assuming that they do not go to them to beg for praise. The contrast between moral decadence and the sublime attracts their glances. The pure shines so brightly in the vicinity of the impure! The contradiction is entertaining. Calyste had nothing to patronize in Sabine, she was irreproachable, and the wasted strength of his heart all went out to Béatrix. If great men have played before our eyes the rôle of Jesus raising the woman taken in adultery, why should ordinary men be more virtuous?

Calyste waited until two o'clock, living upon the thought: "I am going to see her again!" a refrain which has often paid the cost of journeys of seven hundred leagues!—He walked rapidly to Rue de Courcelles, recognized the house, which he had never seen, and stood—yes, he, the son-in-law of the Duc de Grandlieu, as rich and nobly born as the Bourbons, stood at the foot of the stairs, stayed by the question put to him by an old servant:

"Monsieur's name?"

Calyste realized that he must leave Béatrix to do as she chose, and he scrutinized the garden and the walls, covered with the wavy black and yellow

lines produced by the rain upon stucco-work in Paris.

Madame de Rochefide, like almost all ladies of high station who break their chains, had left her husband her fortune when she deserted him, as she did not wish to put out her hand to her tyrant. Conti and Mademoiselle des Touches had supplied her material needs and her mother had also sent her sums of money from time to time. When she was left alone, she was compelled to practice economies that bore very hard upon a woman accustomed to luxurious living. She had therefore climbed to the summit of the hill on which the Parc de Monceaux displays its attractions, and had taken refuge in what was once some great nobleman's second establishment, situated on the street, but provided with a lovely little garden, the rent not exceeding eighteen hundred francs. Nevertheless, she was still attended by an old man-servant, by a lady's maid and by a cook from Alençon, all of whom had remained faithful to her in adversity; so that her destitution would have been accounted opulence by many ambitious bourgeoises.

Calyste ascended a staircase, the stone steps of which had been freshly scrubbed, and the landings filled with flowers. On the first floor, the old valet ushered the baron into his mistress's apartments through a double door of red velvet with red silk lozenges and gilded nails. The hangings of the rooms through which Calyste passed were of silk and velvet. Sober-colored carpets, ample draperies

after the fashion of a *robe de chambre*, in order to afford a glimpse of a corner of the white breast, was of pearl-gray moire, with wide, flowing sleeves from which the arms emerged, enveloped in puffed double undersleeves, separated by gold bands and trimmed with lace to the end. The lovely hair, which the skilful handling of the comb had made to appear abundant, peeped out from beneath a lace cap trimmed with flowers.

"Already?" she said with a smile. "A lover would not have been in such a hurry. You must have secrets to tell me, haven't you?"

She seated herself upon a couch, inviting Calyste with a wave of her hand to sit beside her. By chance—or it may have been with malice aforethought, for women have two memories, the memory of angels and the memory of devils—she gave forth the same perfume that she used at the time of her meeting with Calyste at Les Touches. The first whiff of that perfume, the touch of that dress, the glance of those eyes, which, in the half-darkness, attracted the light to send it forth again—everything tended to deprive Calyste of his wits. The poor fellow was seized anew with the frenzy that had already come within a hair's breadth of causing Béatrix's death; but on this occasion she was on the brink of a couch and not of the Ocean; she rose to ring the bell and placed a finger on her lips. Calyste, called to order by that movement, restrained himself; he understood that Béatrix had no hostile intention.

"Antoine, I am at home to no one," she said to the old servant. "Put some wood on the fire.—You see, Calyste, that I treat you as a friend," she continued with dignity, when the old man had left the room; "do not treat me as your mistress. I have two observations to make to you. In the first place, I would not fight like a fool over a man somebody else loves; in the second place, I do not intend to belong again to any man on earth; for I fancied, Calyste, that I was loved by a sort of Rizzio who was bound by no engagement, by a man entirely free, and you see to what that fatal infatuation has brought me. You are under the empire of the holiest of duties; you have a young, amiable, delightful wife; and you are a father. I should be without excuse, as you are, and we should be two fools—"

"My dear Béatrix, all these arguments fall to the ground before a single fact: I have never loved anyone on earth but you, and I was forced into marriage against my will."

"A little trick that Mademoiselle des Touches played us," said Béatrix with a smile.

Three hours passed, during which Madame de Rochefide held Calyste to the observance of conjugal fidelity by laying before him the horrible ultimatum of an absolute renunciation of Sabine. Nothing else would reassure her, she said, in the terrible position in which Calyste's love would place her. Besides, she considered the sacrifice of Sabine a very small matter,—she knew her well!

"She is as a woman, my dear child, just what

she promised to be as a girl. She is a true Grandlieu, as dark, not to say orange, as her mother the Portuguese, and dried up like her father. To tell the truth, your wife will never be ruined by your desertion, for she's a great boy, quite able to go alone. Poor Calyste, is that the sort of wife you should have had? She has fine eyes, but such eyes as hers are common in Italy and Spain and Portugal. Can one be truly loving with such a meagre figure? Eve was a blonde; dark women descend from Adam; blondes are like God, whose hand expressed in Eve His last thought after the Creation was accomplished."

About six o'clock, Calyste, in desperation, took his hat to go.

"Yes, go, my poor boy, don't grieve her by making her dine without you!"

Calyste remained. He was so young and so easy to attack on his weak side.

"Do you really dare to dine with me?" said Béatrix, feigning amazement, in a tantalizing tone; "my poor cheer does not frighten you, and you have enough independence to overwhelm me with joy by this little proof of affection?"

"Just let me write a word to Sabine," he said, "for she would wait for me till nine o'clock."

"There's my writing table," said Béatrix.

She lighted the candles herself and brought one to the table in order to read what Calyste wrote.

"'My dear Sabine—'

"My dear! so your wife is still dear to you?" she

said, looking at him with an expression cold enough to freeze the marrow in his bones. "Go, go and dine with her!"

" 'I am dining at a restaurant with some friends—'

"A lie! For shame! you are unworthy to be loved by her or by me! Men are all cowards with us! Go, monsieur, go home and dine with your dear Sabine."

Calyste threw himself back on his chair and became as pale as death. The Bretons possess courageous natures which lead them into obstinacy when difficulties arise. The young baron straightened himself up, planted his elbow on the table, rested his chin upon his hand, and gazed with a gleaming eye at the implacable Béatrix. He was so superb that a woman from the North or from the South would have fallen on her knees, saying: "Take me!" But Béatrix, who was born upon the confines of Normandie and Bretagne, belonged to the de Casteran race; desertion had developed in her the ferocious instincts of the Frank, the evil qualities of the Norman; her vengeance demanded a shocking scandal and she was not touched by his sublime attitude.

"Dictate what I am to write and I will obey," said the poor boy. "But then—"

"Why, yes," said she, "for that will mean that you still love me as you loved me at Guérande. Write: 'I am dining out; don't wait for me!'

"And—?" said Calyste, supposing that there was more to come.

"Nothing; sign your name. Good," said she, pouncing upon the note with repressed joy, "I will send this by a messenger."

"And now—" cried Calyste, rising from his chair like a man relieved of a great weight.

"Ah! I reserved my freedom of action, I believe!" —said she, halting and turning about, half-way between the table and the mantelpiece, to which she went to ring the bell.—"Antoine, have this note sent to its address. Monsieur will dine here."

*

Calyste returned home about two in the morning. Sabine sat up for him until half-past twelve, when she went to bed, fairly worn out; she slept, although she had been deeply wounded by the laconic wording of her husband's note; but she invented an explanation! a wife who truly loves her husband always begins by explaining everything in his favor.

"Calyste was hurried," she said to herself.

The next morning the child was much better and the mother's anxiety was allayed. Sabine came in laughing, a few moments before breakfast, with little Calyste in her arms to exhibit him to his father, doing the absurd things and saying the foolish words which young mothers always do and say. This little conjugal scene put Calyste in countenance; he was charming with his wife, thinking all the time that he was a brute. He played like a child with Monsieur le Chevalier; indeed he played with him too much, he overdid his rôle, but Sabine had not yet reached that degree of suspicion at which a woman can make such fine distinctions.

At last, as they sat at breakfast, Sabine asked:

"What were you doing yesterday?"

"Portenduère kept me to dinner," he replied, "and we went to the club for a few games of whist."

"It is a foolish life, my Calyste," said Sabine. "The young noblemen of to-day ought to be thinking of regaining for their country all the ground their fathers lost. It is not by smoking cigars, playing whist, emphasizing their idleness, confining themselves to making impertinent remarks to the parvenus who are forcing them out of all their positions, and separating themselves from the masses to whom they should act as mind and intellect and appear like a special providence—it is not by such means as these that they will earn the right to exist. Instead of being a party, you will soon be nothing more than an opinion, as De Marsay says. Ah! if you knew how my ideas have broadened since I have nursed your child and rocked him to sleep! I would like to see the ancient name of Du Guénic become historic!"

Suddenly she gazed straight into Calyste's eyes, as he sat listening to her with a pensive expression, and said to him:

"Confess that the first note you ever wrote me was a little curt."

"I didn't think of sending word to you till we were at the club—"

"But you wrote me on a lady's paper; there was a feminine perfume hanging about it."

"Club directors are such curious fellows!"

The Vicomte de Portenduère and his wife, a charming young couple, had become so intimate with the Du Guénics that they hired a box at the *Italiens* in common. The two young wives, Ursule

and Sabine, had been drawn together by the delightful interchange of advice and suggestions and confidences concerning children. While Calyste, a novice in the art of falsehood, was saying to himself: "I will go and warn Savinien," Sabine was saying to herself: "It seems to me that there was a coronet on that paper!" That thought passed in and out of her mind like a flash of lightning, and Sabine scolded herself for entertaining it; but it occurred to her that she would go and look at the paper, which, in the midst of her alarms the night before, she had tossed into her letter-box.

After breakfast Calyste went out, saying that he should soon return; he entered one of the low one-horse cabs which were just beginning to replace the clumsy cabriolet of our forefathers, and in a few moments was set down at the viscount's abode on Rue des Saints-Pères. He begged him to do him the slight favor, to be repaid upon occasion, of telling a falsehood in case Sabine should question the viscountess.

Once more in the street, Calyste, having first commanded the greatest possible speed, was driven from Rue des Saints-Pères to Rue de Courcelles in a very few minutes. He was anxious to know how Béatrix had passed the rest of the night. He found the lucky unfortunate just out of her bath, fresh and freshly beautified, and breakfasting with excellent appetite. He admired the grace with which the angel ate boiled eggs, and marveled at the breakfast service in gold, a gift from a music-mad English lord,

for whom Conti composed a romanza or two upon *themes furnished by* his lordship, who had published them as his own. He listened to a few piquant remarks made by his idol, whose main desire was to entertain him, and who feigned anger and wept when he left her. He intended to remain only half an hour, but it was three o'clock when he reached home. His fine English horse, a present from the Vicomtesse de Grandlieu, looked as if he were just out of the water, he was so drenched with sweat. By one of those chances which all jealous women arrange beforehand, Sabine was posted at a window looking on the courtyard, impatient because Calyste did not return, and anxious without knowing why. The condition of the horse, which was foaming at the mouth, attracted her attention.

"Where can he have come from?"

That question was breathed in her ear by that power which is not conscience, which is not the evil or the good angel;—but which sees, which foresees, which shows us the unknown, which makes us believe in mental beings, in creatures born in our brains, going and coming, and living in the invisible sphere of thought.

"Where have you come from, pray, my dear angel?" she said to Calyste, going to meet him as far as the first landing of the staircase. "Abd-el-Kader is almost foundered; you were to be away only a moment and I have been waiting for you three hours."

"Let me see," said Calyste to himself; "I will

get out of this scrape on the plea of a present."—He was making progress in dissimulation.—"Dear nurse," he said aloud, putting his arm about his wife's waist with more cajolery than he would have employed had he not been guilty, "it is impossible, I see, for us to keep a secret, however innocent it may be, from a woman who loves us—"

"Secrets aren't usually divulged on stairways," she said with a laugh. "Come."

As they passed through the salon adjoining her bedroom, she saw Calyste's face in a glass mirror, at a moment when he, not knowing that her eyes were upon him, allowed his fatigue and his real feelings to appear, and no longer smiled.

"The secret?"—she said, turning around and facing him.

"Your heroism as a nurse makes the presumptive heir of the Du Guénics even dearer to me than he would otherwise have been, and I determined to give you a surprise, just like a good bourgeois of Rue Saint-Denis. At this moment a toilet table is being completed for you upon which genuine artists have worked; my mother and Aunt Zéphirine have contributed—"

Sabine threw her arms around Calyste and strained him to her heart, her head resting against his shoulder; she gave way beneath the weight of happiness, not because of the toilet table, but because her first suspicion was dissipated. It was one of those magnificent outbursts which can be counted, and of which all passions, even the most

intense, cannot afford to be lavish, for life would be too soon burned out. At such a time, a man should fall at a woman's feet and worship her, for it is a sublime moment, when the forces of the heart and the mind gush forth, as the water gushes forth from the fountains embellished with architectural nymphs. Sabine burst into tears.

Suddenly, as if bitten by a viper, she left Calyste, threw herself upon a divan and fainted, for the sudden reaction produced by a cold blast upon her blazing heart almost killed her. As she held Calyste in a close embrace, with her nose buried in his cravat, thinking of naught but her joy, she detected the odor of the note paper! Another woman's head had rested there, and her hair and her face had left behind an adulterous perfume. She had kissed the spot upon which her rival's kisses were still warm!

"What is the matter?" said Calyste, after he had restored Sabine to consciousness by passing a wet cloth over her face.

"Go and bring my physician and my *accoucheur*, both of them! I am sure that there is something wrong with my milk.—They won't come instantly unless you go yourself and beg them to do it."

The *you*—in place of the usual familiar thou—impressed Calyste, who rushed from the room in dismay. As soon as she heard the *porte-cochère* close, Sabine sprang to her feet like a frightened deer and ran about the salon like a madwoman, crying:

"My God! my God! my God!"

Those two words replaced all her ideas. The crisis she had alleged as a pretext actually supervened. Each individual hair in her head became a needle heated red in the flame of the nerves. Her boiling blood seemed to be trying at the same moment to penetrate the nerves and to leave the body through the pores! For a moment she was blind.

"I am dying!" she cried.

When, at this terrible shriek of the outraged wife and mother, her maid entered the room; when, having been taken up and put to bed, she had recovered her sight and reasoning power, the first gleam of intelligence prompted her to send the girl to her friend, Madame de Portenduère. She felt her ideas whirling about in her brain like straws caught up by a whirlwind.

"I saw myriads of them at once," she said later.

She rang for her footman, and, in the mad excitement of fever, had the strength to write the following letter; for she was impelled by one frenzied desire,—the desire to be certain of something:

TO MADAME LA BARONNE DU GUÉNIC

"When you come to Paris, dear mamma, as you have given us reason to hope that you will do, I will thank you myself for the lovely present with which you and Aunt Zéphirine and Calyste have chosen to express your gratitude to me for having fulfilled

my duties as a mother. I was already abundantl rewarded by my own happiness!—I cannot preten to describe the pleasure the lovely toilet table ha given me; when you are with me I will tell yo about it. Be sure that whenever I dress before th beautiful table, I shall always think, with the Roma matron, that my loveliest ornament is our dear littl angel.—"

She sent the letter to the post by her maid When the Vicomtesse de Portenduère appeared, thi first paroxysm of madness was succeeded by a alarming attack of fever.

"Ursule, I feel as if I were dying," said she.

"What's the matter, my dear?"

"What did Savinien and Calyste do yesterday after dining with you?"

"Dining with me?" repeated Ursule, to whom her husband had as yet said nothing, not supposing that the investigation would begin at once. "Savinien and I dined together yesterday and then went to the *Italiens*, without Calyste."

"Ursule, my darling, in the name of your love for Savinien, don't mention what you have just told me or what I am going to tell you. Only you will know of what I die.—I am betrayed at the end of the third year, and I am only twenty-two and a half!"

Her teeth chattered, her eyes were dull and heavy; her face took on a greenish tinge and the appearance of an old Venetian mirror.

"You, so lovely!—Betrayed for whom?"

"I have no idea! But Calyste has lied to me twice. Not a word! Don't pity me, don't be angry, feign ignorance; you can perhaps find out *who* it is through Savinien. Oh! that letter yesterday!"

And, shivering in her chemise, she rushed to a small secretary and took out the letter.

"A marchioness's coronet!" said she, going back to bed. "Do you know whether Madame de Rochefide is in Paris?—Ah! I shall have a heart to weep upon, to lament upon!—Oh! my darling, to see one's beliefs, one's poem, one's idol, one's virtue, one's happiness, all shattered, withered, lost!—There is no God in heaven! no love on earth, no life in the heart, nothing anywhere! I don't know whether it is day or night, I doubt if there is any sun—Indeed I have such a pain at my heart that I hardly feel the horrible agony that is tearing at my breast and my face. Luckily the little one is weaned; my milk would have poisoned him!"

At that thought a torrent of tears gushed from Sabine's eyes, which had thus far been dry.

Pretty Madame de Portenduère, holding in her hand the fatal letter which Sabine had put to her nose for the last time, stood aghast before this genuine grief, deeply impressed by the agony of love which she could not understand, notwithstanding the incoherent words by which Sabine tried to tell her the story. Suddenly, Ursule's face was lighted up by one of those ideas which occur only to sincere friends.

"I must save her!" she said to herself.—"Wait for me, Sabine," she cried. "I am going to find out the truth."

"Ah! in my grave I will love you!" cried Sabine.

The viscountess flew to the Duchesse de Grandlieu, demanded the most profound secrecy, and described Sabine's position.

"Madame," said she as she concluded, "is it not your opinion that, to avoid a horrible illness and perhaps madness—who knows?—we ought to tell the doctor the whole story, and invent some fable or other to the advantage of that wretched Calyste, which will make him appear innocent for the time?"

"My dear girl," said the duchess, whose blood ran cold as she listened, "friendship has given you for a moment the experience of a woman of my own age. I know how Sabine loves her husband, and you are right in thinking she may go mad."

"But she may lose her beauty, and that would be even worse!" said the viscountess.

"Let us make haste!" cried the duchess.

Luckily the two women were a few moments in advance of the famous *accoucheur* Dommanget, the only one of the two experts whom Calyste had succeeded in finding.

"Ursule has told me everything," said the duchess to her daughter, "and you are mistaken.—In the first place, Béatrix is not in Paris.—As to what that angelic husband of yours did yesterday,

he lost a lot of money, and he doesn't know which way to turn to pay for your toilet table."

"And what about that?" said Sabine, handing her mother the letter.

"That!" laughed the duchess, "why, that's the Jockey Club paper; everybody writes on paper with a crest; our grocers will be titled soon."

The prudent mother tossed the unlucky letter into the fire. When Calyste and Dommanget arrived, the duchess, who had given instructions to the servants, was at once notified; she left Sabine in charge of Madame de Portenduère and stopped Calyste and the surgeon in the salon.

"Sabine's life is in danger, monsieur," said she to Calyste; "you have been false to her with Madame de Rochefide—"

Calyste blushed like a young girl, still virtuous at heart, detected in transgression.

"And," the duchess continued, "as you don't know how to lie, you have been so awkward that she has guessed everything; but I have repaired the injury. You don't wish my daughter to die, do you?—All this, Monsieur Dommanget, will put you on the track of the real trouble and its cause.—As for you, Calyste, an old woman like myself can understand your error, but without forgiving it. Such forgiveness is to be purchased by a whole lifetime of happiness. If you care for my esteem, save my daughter first of all; then forget Madame de Rochefide—she is not worth possessing more than once!—Make up your mind to lie, have the

courage of the criminal and his impudence. I have lied outrageously, and I shall be compelled to undergo severe penance for that deadly sin!"

And she told him of the fables she had invented. The clever surgeon, sitting at the invalid's bedside, was already studying the symptoms for the means of warding off the danger. While he was prescribing measures, whose success depended upon the rapidity with which they were executed, Calyste sat at the foot of the bed, with his eyes fixed upon Sabine, trying to impart to his glance an expression of warm affection.

"So it was gambling that made those rings around your eyes?" she said in a feeble voice.

This phrase made the doctor, the mother and the viscountess shudder, as they glanced stealthily at one another. Calyste became as red as a cherry.

"That's what comes of nursing your children," Dommanget interposed, cleverly and somewhat brutally. "Husbands are bored to death when they are separated from their wives, and they go to the club and play.—But don't regret the thirty thousand francs Monsieur le Baron lost last night."

"Thirty thousand francs!" cried Ursule foolishly.

"Yes, I know all about it," Dommanget replied. —"I was told this morning at young Madame Berthe de Maufrigneuse's that Monsieur de Trailles won them from you," he said to Calyste. "How can you play with such a man? Frankly, Monsieur le Baron, I don't wonder that you're ashamed of it."

When he saw his pious mother-in-law, a duchess,

together with the young viscountess, a happy wife, and an old *accoucheur*, an egotist, lying like dealers in curiosities, the kind-hearted and noble Calyste realized the greatness of the danger, and he shed two great tears which deceived Sabine.

"Monsieur," said she, sitting up in bed, and glancing angrily at Dommanget, "Monsieur du Guénic can lose thirty, forty, a hundred thousand francs, if he pleases, without any person being called upon to blame him or give him lessons. It is much better that Monsieur de Trailles should win back the money we have won from Monsieur de Trailles."

Calyste rose, put his arm around his wife's neck, kissed her on both cheeks, and whispered in her ear:

"Sabine, you are an angel!"

Two days later the young woman was considered out of danger. The next day Calyste was at Madame de Rochefide's, taking credit for his infamy.

"Béatrix," he said, "you are indebted to me for a piece of good fortune. I have sacrificed my poor wife to you. She has discovered everything. That paper you gave me to write on, with your name and crest, which I never saw! I saw only you!—Luckily the cipher, your *B*, happened to be rubbed off. But the perfume you left upon me, the lies in which I involved myself, like a fool, betrayed my good fortune. Sabine nearly died; the milk went to her head, she has an attack of erysipelas, and it may be that she will bear the marks of it all her life."

As she listened to this harangue, Béatrix's face

wore an expression that would have set the Sein on fire if she had looked at it.

"Well, so much the better," she replied, "th will whiten her for you perhaps."

And Béatrix, who had become as dry as her bone uneven as her complexion, sharp as her voice, co tinued in this strain through a whole litany vicious epigrams. A husband can commit no greate blunder than to talk about his wife, when she virtuous, to his mistress, unless it be to talk abo his mistress, when she is beautiful, to his wif But Calyste had not yet received that species Parisian education which we must call the courtes of the passions. He neither knew how to lie to hi wife nor to tell his mistress the truth, in both which accomplishments a man must serve his a prenticeship in order to be able to manage wome Thus, he was forced to exert all the power of h passion to obtain forgiveness from Béatrix after tw hours' solicitation, during which time it was co sistently refused by an offended angel who looke at the ceiling in order not to see the culprit, a who rehearsed the arguments peculiar to marchio esses in a voice interlarded with little tears, th seemed rent, and that she furtively wiped awa with the lace handkerchief.

"To talk to me about your wife the day aft my fall from grace!—Why don't you tell me th she's a pearl of virtue? I know that she think about your physical beauty! There's depravity f you! For my part, I love your mind! for, you mu

understand, my dear, that you are horribly ugly, compared with some of the shepherds in the Roman Campagna!"—etc., etc.

This phraseology may cause surprise, but it was part of a system upon which Béatrix had meditated long and profoundly. At her third incarnation—for with each succeeding passion a woman becomes an entirely different person—she advances so much farther in libertinism,—the only word which gives an accurate idea of the experience such adventures afford. Now the Marquise de Rochefide had judged herself by her mirror. Women of intelligence are never deceived as to themselves; they count their wrinkles, they are present at the birth of the crow's foot, they watch the gray hairs peep out, they know themselves by heart and announce that fact too frankly by the strenuous efforts they make to preserve themselves. And so, in order to contend with a superb young wife and to win six triumphs over her each week, Béatrix had had recourse to the science of courtesans for her advantages. Without confessing to herself the infamy of the plan, impelled to the employment of such means by a sort of Turkish passion for handsome Calyste, she had vowed to make him believe that he was ungraceful and ugly and had a bad figure, and to conduct herself as if she hated him. No system is more fruitful in results with arrogant men. With such men, is it not renewing the first day's triumph on each succeeding day, to be forced to overcome this cunning disdain? It is more than that, it is flattery

concealed beneath the livery of hate, and owin thereto the charm, the truth with which all metamo phoses are clothed by the sublime, unknown poe who invented them.

Does not a man say to himself under such ci cumstances; "I am irresistible!" or: "I love h dearly, for I can overcome her repugnance"? you deny this principle, divined by flirts and cou tesans of all social zones, let us deny the seeke after knowledge, the investigators of mysterie who were defeated for long years in their duel wit secret causes.

Béatrix had re-enforced the use of scorn as moral piston-rod by the perpetual comparison of poetic, comfortable home with the Hôtel du Guéni Every neglected wife who becomes careless abou herself, becomes careless also about her home, s discouraged is she. With this thought in her mind Madame de Rochefide began a series of stealth attacks upon the magnificence of the Faubourg Saint Germain, which she characterized as absurd. Th reconciliation scene, in which Béatrix extorted a oath of hatred to the wife, whose illness, she insisted was a farce, took place in a genuine bosky grov where she ogled and leered, surrounded by beautifu flowers, by jardinières of unrivaled magnificence The science of airy nothings, of fashionable trifles she carried to extremes. As she had been lef without shelter against the contempt of society b Conti's desertion, Béatrix was determined to ac quire such renown, at least, as depravity affords

The misery of a young wife, a Grandlieu, rich and lovely, would be a pedestal for her.

When a woman goes back to her ordinary manner of life after nursing her first child, she reappears in society more charming than ever. If this phase of maternity rejuvenates women of a certain age, it imparts to young women a rosy-hued splendor, a joyous sprightliness, a *brio*, if we may be allowed to apply to the body the word that the Italians apply to the mind. When she tried to resume the delightful habits of the honeymoon, Sabine found Calyste by no means the same. The unhappy creature watched him, instead of abandoning herself to such happiness as might have been hers. She sought the fatal perfume and smelt it. The result was that she did not confide again in her friend or in her mother, who had charitably deceived her. She longed for certainty, and certainty was not long in coming. Certainty is never lacking; it is like the sun and soon makes blinds necessary. In love, the fable of the Woodcutter summoning Death is constantly repeated; we call on certainty to make us blind.

One morning, a fortnight after the first crisis, Sabine received this crushing letter:

TO MADAME LA BARONNE DU GUÉNIC

"Guérande.

"MY DEAR DAUGHTER,

"My sister Zéphirine and I are lost in conjectures as to the toilet table mentioned in your letter; I am

writing to Calyste about it, and I beg you to pardon our ignorance. You can not doubt our hearts. We are heaping up riches for you. Thanks to Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's advice as to the investment of your property, you will find yourselves in a few years in possession of a considerable fortune, without any diminution of income meanwhile.

"Your letter, my dear daughter, whom I love as dearly as if I had carried you in my bosom and fed you with my milk, surprised me by its brevity, and above all, by your silence as to my dear little Calyste; there was nothing you could tell me about his father, for I know how happy he is; but—" etc.

Sabine wrote across this letter: *Every noble Breton is not utterly abandoned to falsehood!*—and placed it on Calyste's desk. Calyste found the letter there and read it. When he had satisfied himself as to the handwriting of Sabine's words, he threw the letter into the fire, determined to deny that he had ever received it. Sabine passed a whole week in an agony unknown to the angelic or solitary souls whom the wicked angel's wing has never brushed. Calyste's silence frightened her.

"I, who should be all sweetness to him, who should cause him nothing but pleasure, have displeased him, wounded him!—My virtue has made itself hateful to him; I must have humiliated my idol!" she said to herself.

These thoughts ploughed furrows in her heart.

She longed to ask pardon for her fault, but certainty hurled fresh proofs at her.

Béatrix, become bold and insolent, wrote to Calyste one day at his own house; Madame du Guénic received the letter and handed it unopened to her husband, but she said to him with death at her heart and in an altered voice:

"This letter comes from the Jockey Club, my dear—I recognize the odor and the paper."

Calyste blushed and put the letter in his pocket.

"Why don't you read it?"

"I know what they want of me."

The young woman sank upon a chair. She no longer had the fever, she no longer wept, but she was assailed by one of the paroxysms of fury which, in such feeble creatures, give birth to miracles of crime, which place arsenic in their hands, either for themselves or for their rivals. Little Calyste was brought in and she took him on her knee to dandle him. The child, newly weaned, felt for the breast through her dress.

"He remembers!"—she said in an undertone.

Calyste went to his own room to read the letter.

When she was alone, the young woman burst into tears,—such tears as women shed when they are alone. Grief, like pleasure, has its period of initiation. The first crisis, which in Sabine's case was nearly fatal, has, like the first fruits of everything, no recurrence. It is the opening wedge of the sufferings of the heart; the others are expected, the shattering of the nerves is familiar, and the

sum total of our strength has made its dispositions for energetic resistance. And so Sabine, sure of treachery, passed three hours with her son in her arms, at the corner of the hearth, and was amazed when Gasselin, become *valet de chambre*, appeared and said:

"Madame is served."

"Tell monsieur."

"Monsieur does not dine at home, Madame la Baronne."

Can any one conceive the agony, under such circumstances, of a young wife of twenty-three, sitting alone in the middle of the immense dining-room of an old-fashioned mansion, and served by silent domestics?

"Order the carriage," she said abruptly; "I am going to the *Italiens*."

She made a magnificent toilet, resolved to appear alone and with a smiling face like a happy wife. Amid the remorse caused by the comment she had written across the letter, she had determined to conquer, to win Calyste back by excessive gentleness, by wifely virtue, by the tenderness of the Paschal Lamb. She proposed to lie to all Paris. She loved, she loved as courtesans and angels love, with pride and with humility. But the opera was *Otello!* When Rubini sang: *Il mio cor si divide*, she fled. Music is often more powerful than the poet and the actor, the two most formidable natures that are ever united. Savinien de Portenduère escorted Sabine to the peristyle and put her in her carriage, utterly unable to account for her precipitate flight.

ereupon, Madame du Guénic entered upon a
l of suffering of a sort peculiar to the aristoc-
Envious, poor, wretched though you may be,
you see women wearing necklaces and brace-
ınd having golden serpents with diamond heads
their arms, be sure that the vipers are biting,
:he necklaces have poisoned points, and that
fragile bonds pierce the delicate flesh to the
. All such luxury must be paid for. In Sa-
s position, women curse the pleasures of wealth,
no longer see the gilded splendor of their
s, the silk covering of the divans is tow,
:xotic plants are nettles, the perfumes are
ous, the miracles of culinary art rasp the
: like coarse bread, and life takes on the bitter-
of the Dead Sea. Two or three examples will
t such a reaction caused by a particular salon
woman upon one's happiness, in such a manner
ıll those who have experienced it will recognize
:m their own domestic impressions.
:ll-advised of this frightful reality, Sabine
ıed her husband closely when he went out,
ng to guess what the day was to bring forth.
vith what restrained rage a woman hurls her-
pon the red-hot points of these barbarous instru-
s of torture!—What delirious joy if he did not go
e de Courcelles! When he returned home, the
of his brow, of his features, of his hair, of his
of his manner, imparted a ghastly interest to
, to observations which she extended to the
:st details of the toilet, and which cause a

woman to lose her nobility and dignity. These ominous investigations, which she kept hidden in the bottom of her heart, festered there and corrupted the delicate roots from which spring the blue flowers of blessed trust, the golden stars of unselfish love and all the flowers of memory.

One day Calyste looked at everything in his house ill-humoredly; he was at home that day! Sabine hurried humbly about him, striving to be cheerful and bright.

"You are cross with me, Calyste; am I not a good wife to you? What is it that you don't like?" she asked.

"All the rooms seem cold and bare," he said; "you don't understand these things."

"What do they need?"

"Flowers."

"Ah!" said Sabine to herself, "it seems that Madame de Rochefide is fond of flowers."

Two days later the rooms wore an entirely different aspect; no one could boast of having more or lovelier flowers than those with which they were embellished.

Some time after, Calyste complained of the cold one evening after dinner. He moved restlessly about on a couch, looking around as if to discover the source of a draught, or as if looking for something near him. It took Sabine a long while to guess the meaning of this new whim, for there was a large stove that warmed the stairways, antechambers and passageways. At last, after three days

SABINE AND CALYSTE AT HOME

One day Calyste looked at everything in his house ill-humoredly; he was at home that day! Sabine hurried humbly about him, striving to be cheerful and bright.

"You are cross with me, Calyste; am I not a good wife to you?"

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of meditation, she concluded that her rival must use a screen to provide the half-light so favorable to the decadence of her beauty, and she procured a screen, it was fitted with mirrors, and was Jewish in its magnificence.

"Which way will the wind blow now?" she said to herself.

She had not reached the end of the mistress's indirect criticisms. Calyste ate his food in a way to drive Sabine mad; he handed his plates to the servant after dallying with two or three mouthfuls.

"Isn't it good?" Sabine asked, in despair at seeing thrown away all the time and care which she expended in conferences with her cook.

"I didn't say that, my angel," replied Calyste good-humoredly; "I am not hungry, that's all."

A woman consumed by a legitimate passion, who is required to struggle thus, abandons herself to a sort of frenzy in order to triumph over her rival, and often overshoots the mark, even in the secret regions of marriage. This cruel, fierce, incessant contest in visible and, so to speak, exterior matters of the household, was also waged as hotly in matters pertaining to the heart. Sabine studied her attitudes, her toilets; she watched herself carefully in all the infinite trifles of love.

The matter of the kitchen lasted nearly a month. Sabine, assisted by Mariotte and Gasselin, invented comic opera stratagems to find out what dishes Calyste was fed upon at Madame de Rochefide's. Gasselin took the place of Calyste's coachman who

was taken sick to order; Gasselin was enabled thus to become acquainted with Béatrix's cook, and Sabine at last gave Calyste the same dishes, served in better shape; but she saw that he still seemed dissatisfied.

"What is lacking now?" she asked.

"Nothing," he replied, looking the table over for something that was not there.

"Ah!" cried Sabine as she awoke the next morning, "Calyste wanted pounded cockchafers and the English preparations that they use in drug stores in oil cruets; Madame de Rochefide is accustoming him to all sorts of condiments!"

She purchased the English cruet with its red-hot accompaniments; but she could not pursue her discoveries so far as to cover all the preparations invented by her rival.

This condition of affairs lasted several months; that will not cause surprise if we remember the attractions that a struggle presents. It is life itself, it is preferable, with all its wounds and its sorrows, to the dark shadows of disgust, to the poison of disdain, to the nullity of abdication, to the death of the heart which is called indifference. But all Sabine's courage abandoned her one evening when she appeared in such a toilet as the desire to triumph over a rival inspires a woman to invent, and Calyste said to her, laughingly:

"It's no use, Sabine, you will never be anything but a lovely Andalusian!"

"Alas!" she replied, throwing herself upon her

couch, "I can never be a blonde; but I know that, if this continues, I shall soon be thirty-five years old."

She refused to go to the *Italiens*, she insisted upon remaining at home all the evening. When she was alone, she tore the flowers from her hair and stamped upon them, she undressed, she trampled her dress, her scarf, all her clothes, under her feet, just as a goat, caught in the noose of his rope, does not cease his struggles until he feels that death is upon him. Then she went to bed. Her maid entered the room; her amazement may be imagined.

"It's nothing," said Sabine, "it was monsieur!"

Unhappy women do have sublimely ridiculous moments when they utter falsehoods in which, of two contending causes of shame, the more feminine carries the day.

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Sabine grew thin at this terrible game; grief gnawed at her heart, but she never departed from the rôle she had undertaken to play. Sustained by feverish excitement, her lips pressed the bitter words back into her throat when her agony suggested them to her; she repressed the gleam of her glorious black eyes, and made them gentle, even to humility. But it soon became evident that her health was failing.

The duchess, an excellent mother, although her piety was becoming more and more Portuguese in its fervency, feared a fatal result of the really serious condition of health in which Sabine seemed to take pleasure. She knew of the close intimacy existing between Calyste and Béatrix. She took the trouble to entice her daughter to her own house, in order to try and soothe the wounds in her heart, and, above all, to rescue her by force from her martyrdom; but Sabine for some time maintained absolute silence concerning her unhappiness, fearing that they would intervene between her and Calyste. She said that she was happy! Miserable as she was, she recovered her pride, all her great qualities!

But, after a month, during which Sabine was petted and coaxed by her sister Clotilde and her mother, she confessed her chagrin, confided her agony to them, cursed life, and declared that she looked upon the approach of death with delirious

joy. She begged Clotilde, who was resolved never to marry, to be a mother to little Calyste, the most beautiful child that ever royal race could desire for presumptive heir.

One evening, as she was sitting with the duchess and Clotilde, and her youngest sister Marie-Athénaïs, whose marriage with the Vicomte de Grandlieu was to be celebrated after Lent, Sabine gave vent to the culminating cry of her heart agony, aroused by the outrage of a last humiliation.

"Athénaïs," she said, when young Juste de Grandlieu left the house about eleven o'clock, "you are soon to be married; take warning from my example! Refrain from displaying your attractions as from a crime, do not yield to the pleasure of adorning yourself to please Juste. Be calm, cold and dignified, measure the happiness you give by what you receive! It is a base expedient, but it is necessary. Look at me! I am dying because of my attractive qualities. All that there is beautiful or sweet or great in my character or person, all my virtues, are reefs upon which my happiness has been wrecked. I no longer please my husband because I am not thirty-six years old! In the eyes of certain men, youth is an inferiority! You can judge nothing from an innocent face. I laugh frankly, and that's a fault! for, in order to fascinate, one should know how to assume the melancholy half-smile of the fallen angels who are obliged to conceal long, yellow teeth. A fresh complexion is monotonous! men prefer a doll's plaster made of rouge, spermaceti

and *cold cream.* I am upright, and perversity is the pleasing quality! I am loyally loving and passionate, like a virtuous wife, and I should be as tricky and false and hypocritical as a provincial actress. I am intoxicated with happiness at having for my husband one of the most delightful men in France, I tell him ingenuously what a distinguished air he has, how graceful his movements are, and I show him that I think him handsome; but, to please him, I must turn my head away in feigned disgust, give no sign of love, and tell him that his distinguished air is a mark of ill health, that he has the figure of a consumptive, extol the Farnese Hercules' shoulders, anger him and defend myself, as if I needed a dispute to conceal, in my happy moments, some of those imperfections which may destroy love. I am so unlucky as to admire lovely things, and I never think of exalting myself by bitter, envious criticism of everything that glistens with poesy and beauty. I have no need to have Canalis and Nathan tell me, in prose and verse, that I have a superior intellect! I am a poor, innocent child and I know no one but Calyste. Ah! if I had traveled the world over, as *she* has, if I had said: 'I love you!' as *she* says it, in all the languages of Europe, I should be consoled and pitied and adored, and I should serve the Macedonian banquet of a cosmopolitan passion! You receive no thanks for your marks of affection until you have set them in relief by your sins. In short, I, a woman of noble birth, must make myself acquainted with all the impurities and all the vile

schemes of *harlots!*—And think of Calyste, who is the dupe of her apish tricks! O mother! O my dear Clotilde! I feel that my wounds are fatal. My pride is a deceitful protection, I am defenceless against grief. I still love my husband like a madwoman, and to bring him back to me, I must borrow from indifference all its cunning."

"Silly girl," said Clotilde in her ear, "act as if you proposed to be revenged.—"

"I propose to die without a stain on my character, and without the appearance of a fault," said Sabine. "Our vengeance should be worthy of our love."

"My child," said the duchess, "a mother should look upon life a little more coolly than you do. Love is not the end but the means, from the standpoint of the family; don't imitate that poor little Baronne de Macumer. Excessive passion is barren and deadly. God visits affliction upon us to accomplish His own purposes.—Now that Athénaïs's marriage is all arranged, I am going to turn my attention to you. I have already discussed your delicate position with your father, the Duc de Chaulieu and D'Ajuda; we shall find plenty of ways to bring Calyste back to you."

"With the Marquise de Rochefide, there is always hope!" said Clotilde, smiling at her sister; "she doesn't keep her adorers long."

"D'Ajuda, my angel," continued the duchess, "is Monsieur de Rochefide's brother-in-law. If our good confessor approves the little wiles to which we must resort to secure the success of the plan I have

suggested to your father, I can assure you of Calyste's return. My conscience shrinks from such expedients, and I propose to submit them to Abbé Brossette's judgment. We won't wait until you are *in extremis* before coming to your assistance, my child. Be of good cheer! Your chagrin is so great to-night that my secret escaped me; for it was impossible not to give you a bit of hope."

"Will it make Calyste unhappy?" said Sabine, looking anxiously at the duchess.

"*Mon Dieu!* shall I ever be as idiotic as that?" cried Athénaïs naïvely.

"Ah! little one, you know not the steep defiles into which virtue leads us when it allows love to be its guide," rejoined Sabine, unconsciously adopting a poetical turn of expression, so distraught was she by her grief.

The words were said with such penetrating bitterness, that the duchess, enlightened by Madame du Guénic's tone and accent and expression, determined that there must be some disaster as yet undivulged.

"It is twelve o'clock, children, away with you!" she said to her two unmarried daughters, whose eyes shone with curiosity.

"Am I in the way, despite my thirty-six years?" queried Clotilde, jocosely.

And while Athénaïs was kissing her mother, she leaned over Sabine and whispered:

"You must tell me about it!—I will come and dine with you to-morrow. If my mother finds that

her conscience is in danger, I will rescue Calyste from the hands of the unfaithful for you myself."

"Well, Sabine," said the duchess, leading her daughter into her bedroom, "tell me what new thing has happened, my child."

"Oh! mamma, I am lost!"

"Why so?"

"I was determined to triumph over my rival and I succeeded; I am *enceinte*, and Calyste loves her so, that I anticipate absolute desertion. When his infidelity to *her* is proved, *she* will be furious! Ah! I suffer so horribly that I cannot endure it. I know when he is going there, I can tell by his joyful manner; and his ill-humor tells me when he has just left her. Indeed, he no longer takes the trouble to conceal the fact that he cannot endure me. Her influence over him is as unhealthy as are her body and soul. You will see that she will demand, as the price of a reconciliation, a public desertion, a rupture like her own with her husband, and she will take him away from me, to Switzerland perhaps, or Italy. He is beginning to think it ridiculous that he knows nothing of Europe, and I know the meaning of such remarks thrown out beforehand. If Calyste is not cured within three months, I don't know what will happen.—Yes, I do know; I shall kill myself!"

"Think of your soul, unhappy child! Suicide is a deadly sin."

"Do you not understand? she is capable of having a child by him!—And if Calyste should love that

woman's child better than mine! ah! that would be the limit of my patience and resignation!"

She fell upon a chair; she had divulged the last thoughts of her heart, she was left with no concealed grief, and grief is like the iron rod that sculptors place in the middle of their clay—it is a sustaining force!

"Go home now, my poor wounded darling! In the face of such misery, the abbé will undoubtedly give me absolution for the venial sins that the ruses of society compel us to commit. Leave me, my child," said she, going to her *prie-Dieu*, "I am going to pray to Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin, especially for you. Adieu, my dear Sabine; neglect none of your religious duties if you wish that we should succeed—"

"It would do us no good to succeed, mother; we should save only the family. Calyste has killed the holy fervor of love in my heart, by surfeiting me with everything, even with sorrow. What a honeymoon was that, in which I tasted, from the very first day, the bitterness of retrospective infidelity!"

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The next day, about one o'clock in the afternoon, one of the curés of Faubourg Saint-Germain—bishop-designate of one of the sees vacant in 1840, which see he thrice refused—Abbé Brossette, one of the most distinguished of the clergy of Paris, crossed the courtyard of the Hôtel de Grandlieu at the gait, for which we can find no better name than the gait ecclesiastic, so instinct is it with prudence, mystery, calmness, gravity and dignity. He was a short, thin man, about fifty years old, with a face as white as an old woman's, emaciated by fasting, wrinkled by all the sufferings that he made his own. Two black eyes, gleaming with fervent faith, but softened by a mysterious rather than mystic expression, gave animation to his apostle-like face.

He almost smiled as he ascended the steps, so sceptical was he as to the magnitude of the emergency which led to his being summoned by this particular lamb of his flock; but, as the duchess's hand was like a sieve in the matter of almsgiving, she was well worth the time that her innocent confessions stole from the serious miseries of the parish.

When the curé was announced, the duchess rose and walked forward to meet him, a mark of distinction which she accorded only to cardinals, bishops, simple priests, duchesses older than herself and persons of the blood royal.

"My dear abbé," said she, motioning to a chair

with her own hand and speaking in a low tone, "I require the sanction of your experience before embarking upon an unsavory sort of intrigue, which, however, is likely to have the best results; and I desire to learn from you if I shall find thorns in the path of salvation if I go forward with it."

"Madame la Duchesse," the abbé replied, "do not mingle spiritual affairs and worldly affairs; they are often irreconcilable. In the first place, what is the difficulty?"

"My daughter Sabine, you must know, is dying of a broken heart; Monsieur de Guénic neglects her for Madame de Rochefide."

"That is a serious, a very shocking thing; but you know what our dear Saint François de Sales says upon that subject. Remember Madame Guyon, too, who, in default of subjects of mysticism, complained of the proofs of conjugal love; she would have been very happy if her husband had had a Madame de Rochefide."

"Sabine is only too sweet with him, she is too much the Christian wife; but she hasn't the slightest taste for mysticism."

"Poor young woman!" said the curé, mischievously. "What remedy have you conceived for this calamity?"

"I have committed the sin, my dear director, of thinking of letting loose upon Madame de Rochefide a pretty little fellow, self-willed and running over with bad qualities, who would certainly cause her to dismiss my son-in-law."

"My daughter," said Abbé Brossette, caressing his chin, "we are not now in the confessional, and it is not for me to act as your judge. From a worldly point I admit that that would be decisive."

"It seemed to me a hateful expedient!" she continued.

"Why so, pray? To be sure it is the part of a Christian rather to lead a lost woman from the path of evil than to urge her on in that path; but, when one is as far advanced as Madame de Rochefide,—why, the hand of God, and not the hand of man is necessary to lead such sinners back into the fold; they require signs from Heaven of a peculiar kind."

"I thank you for your indulgence, father," said the duchess; "but it has occurred to me that my son-in-law is a brave man and a Breton; he behaved like a hero at the time of Madame's escapade. Now, if the young spark who undertakes to fall in love with Madame de Rochefide should have trouble with Calyste, and a duel should follow—"

"That was a very wise reflection, my dear duchess, and proves that in such tortuous paths as these we always come upon stumbling-blocks."

"But I have discovered a method, my dear abbé, of accomplishing a great result, of leading Madame de Rochefide out of the fatal path in which she is now involved, of restoring Calyste to his wife, and, it may be, of saving a poor, desperate creature from hell—"

"In that case, why consult me?" said the curé with a smile.

"Ah!" replied the duchess, "I must descend to acts that are decidedly ugly to contemplate."

"You don't propose to steal from anyone?"

"On the contrary, I shall probably spend a great deal of money."

"You will not bear false witness?—you—"

"Oh!"

"You will not injure your neighbor?"

"Eh! I don't know about that."

"Let us hear your latest plan," said the abbé with interest.

"'Suppose that, instead of driving one nail out with another,' I thought to myself as I knelt before my *prie-Dieu*, after imploring the Blessed Virgin to enlighten me, 'I should cause Calyste's dismissal by Monsieur de Rochefide by persuading that gentleman to take his wife back? instead of lending my hand to evil that good may result to my daughter, I should accomplish one great blessing by means of another no less great.'"

The curé gazed thoughtfully at the Portuguese.

"That idea evidently came to you from so great a distance, that—"

"For that reason, I gave thanks to the Virgin for it!" said the good woman, humbly. "And I made a vow, that, in addition to offering up prayers for nine days, I would give twelve hundred francs to some poor family, if I succeeded. But when I suggested this plan to Monsieur de Grandlieu, he began to

laugh and said to me: 'On my word of honor, I believe that you have a devil all to yourselves to undertake such a thing at your ages!' "

"Monsieur le Duc, like a good husband, made the reply I was about to make when you interrupted me," said the abbé, unable to repress a smile.

"But, father, if you approve the idea, do you approve the method of execution? We must do with a certain Madame Schontz, a Béatrix of Quartier Saint-Georges, what I proposed to do with Madame de Rochefide, in order to induce the marquis to take back his wife."

"I am certain that you can do nothing wrong," said the curé adroitly, for, deeming the result essential, he did not care to know more concerning the means. "You can consult me in case your conscience murmurs, you know," he added. "Suppose that, instead of giving this lady on Rue Saint-Georges a further opportunity to cause scandal, you should give her a husband?"

"Ah! my dear director, you have strengthened the only weak point in my plan. You are worthy to be an archbishop, and I hope that I may not die without addressing you as 'Your Eminence.' "

"I see but one possible obstacle in all this," continued the curé.

"What is that?"

"Suppose Madame de Rochefide should try to keep the baron even if she does return to her husband?"

"That is my affair," said the duchess. "When

one has but little to do with intriguing, one does that little—"

"Badly, very badly," the abbé interrupted; "practice is necessary in everything. Try to kidnap one of the wretched creatures who pass their lives in intrigue, and employ him without showing yourself."

"Ah! Monsieur le Curé, if we make use of hell, will heaven be on our side?"

"You are not at confession," the abbé repeated; "save your child!"

The good duchess, enchanted with her curé, escorted him as far as the door of the salon.

*

A tempest was rumbling, as we see, over the head of Monsieur de Rochefide, who was enjoying, at that moment, the greatest happiness that a Parisian can desire, for he was quite as much Madame Schontz's husband as Béatrix's; and, as the duke had wisely remarked to his wife, it seemed impossible to disturb such a delightful, complete existence.

This presumption leads us to give some slight details as to the life Monsieur de Rochefide had led since his wife had transformed him into a *deserted husband.* Then it will be easy to understand the enormous difference in the mode of treatment which our laws and our moral code apply to the same situation in the two sexes. Everything that brings disaster to a deserted wife tends to promote the happiness of a deserted husband. This striking contrast may inspire in more than one young wife the determination to remain at home, as Sabine du Guénic did, and fight the battle there, employing at her choice the most deadly or the most inoffensive qualities.

Some few days after Béatrix's escapade with Conti, Arthur de Rochefide, who had become an only child by virtue of the death, without heirs, of his sister, Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto's first wife, found himself proprietor of the Hôtel de Rochefide, Rue d'Anjou-Saint-Honoré, and of an income of two hundred

thousand francs left him by his father. This handsome inheritance, added to the fortune Arthur possessed when he married, increased his income, including that from his wife's fortune, to a thousand francs a day. To a nobleman endowed with the character which Mademoiselle des Touches described in a few words to Calyste, such a fortune was of itself happiness. While his wife was burdened with the cost of her passion and her motherhood, Rochefide enjoyed immense wealth, but he no more squandered it than he squandered his wit. His frank, vulgar vanity, already abundantly satisfied by a conceited swagger, to which he was indebted for some successes that he appealed to in justification of his contempt for women, imparted an equal amount of self-assurance to his bearing in the domain of intellect.

Endowed with that sort of wit which we must call reflective, he appropriated the bright sallies of others in plays and newspaper by dint of saying them over and over again; he seemed to be making sport of them, he repeated them perfunctorily, he applied them as formulas of criticism; his military joviality, too—he had served in the Garde Royale—seasoned his conversation so opportunely, that unintelligent women proclaimed him a clever man, and the others dared not contradict them. This system Arthur pursued in everything; he was indebted to nature for the very convenient genius of mimicry without making a monkey of himself; he mimicked with a sober face. And so, although he

had no taste, he was always the first to adopt and to abandon a fashion. Although accused of passing a little too much time at his toilet and of wearing corsets, he was a perfect type of the man who never offends anybody because he constantly espouses everybody's ideas and follies, and who, being always mounted upon circumstance, never grows old.

Such men are the heroes of mediocrity. This husband was pitied; it was said that Béatrix had done an unpardonable thing in leaving the best fellow in the world, and ridicule assailed the wife alone. A member of all the clubs, a subscriber to all the absurd undertakings promoted by misdirected patriotism or party spirit—an obliging trait, which caused him to be placed in the front row on all occasions—this loyal, worthy and very foolish nobleman, whom unhappily so many rich men resemble, was certain, in the nature of things, to be fired with the ambition to distinguish himself by some fashionable mania. He vaunted himself principally therefore upon being the sultan of a seraglio of quadrupeds, governed by an old English groom, which absorbed from four to five thousand francs a month. His specialty consisted in *racing;* he patronized the equine race, he supported a review devoted to the interests of horse-racing; but his knowledge of horses was very limited, and he relied upon his groom for everything, from reins to shoes.

Suffice it to say that this *quasi*-bachelor had nothing of his own, neither his wit, nor his taste,

nor his position, nor his absurdities; even his fortune came to him from his fathers! After having tasted all the disenchantments of married life, he was so well content to find himself once more a bachelor, that he said to his friends: "I was born under a lucky star!" He was especially pleased to be relieved from the expense of the outside show which married men are bound to keep up, and his house in Paris, in which he had made no changes since his father's death, resembled the houses whose owners are traveling abroad: he passed but little time there, never took his meals and rarely slept there. The explanation of this neglect follows.

After many love intrigues, having had his fill of society women, who are genuinely wearisome and who plant too many hedges of dry thorns around their favors, he had, as we shall see, *married* the illustrious Madame Schontz, illustrious in the social circle of the Fanny Beauprés, the Suzanne de Val-Nobles, the Mariettes, the Florentines, the Jenny Cadines, etc. That circle, of which one of our artists said, pointing to the whirling mass at the *Bal de l'Opéra:* "When we think that all those creatures are well lodged, well dressed and well fed, it gives us a fine idea of man!" that redoubtable circle has already made an irruption into this history of manners and morals in the typical figures of Florine in *A Daughter of Eve*, and the illustrious Malaga in *The Pretended Mistress;* but, in order to represent it faithfully, the historian should make the number of such personages proportionate to the

diverse terminations of their strange lives, which end in indigence in its most ghastly form, in premature death, in comfortable circumstances, in happy marriages, and sometimes in opulence.

Madame Schontz, who was at first known by the name of La Petite Aurélie, to distinguish her from one of her rivals much less clever than she, belonged to the highest class of those women whose social utility cannot be called in question by the prefect of the Seine or by those people who interest themselves in the prosperity of the city of Paris. Certainly the *rat* accused of demolishing fortunes that are often hypothetical is more nearly akin to the beaver. If it were not for the Aspasias of Quartier Notre-Dame de Lorette, there would be fewer houses built in Paris. Pioneers of new buildings in plaster and stucco, they coast along the hillsides of Montmartre, in tow of speculation, driving the picket of their tents, be it said without metaphor, into those solitudes of carved ashlar that line the streets of Amsterdam, Milan, Stockholm, London and Moscow —architectural *steppes* where innumerable signs creak and groan in the wind, betraying the emptiness within by these words: *Rooms to let!*

The pecuniary condition of these ladies is determined by their location in these apocryphal quarters: if their houses are near the line of the Rue de Provence extended, they have property in the funds, their budgets are in a prosperous condition; but if a woman ascends toward the line of the outer boulevards, toward the horrifying community of

Batignolles, she is penniless. Now, when Monsieur de Rochefide fell in with Madame Schontz, she occupied the third floor of the only house then in existence upon Rue de Berlin, so that she was encamped upon the boundary line between misery and Paris.

This unmarried wife's name was, as you have probably foreseen, neither Schontz nor Aurélie! She concealed the name of her father, who was an old soldier of the Empire, the everlasting colonel who figures at the outset of the existences of most of these women, either as father or as seducer. Madame Schontz had enjoyed the privilege of being educated gratuitously at Saint-Denis, where young women are given an admirable education, but are provided with neither a husband nor a market when they leave the school, *a most excellent creation* of the Emperor, which lacks but one thing: the Emperor!

"I shall be there to provide for the daughters of my legionaries," he replied when one of his ministers referred to the possibilities of the future. Napoléon had also said: "I shall be there!" in reference to the members of the Institute, who were destined to receive no other advantages than a remittance of *eighty-three francs* per month, a smaller salary than that of many office boys.

Aurélie was really the daughter of the gallant Colonel Schiltz, an officer of the audacious Alsatian guerrillas who almost saved the Emperor in the French campaign; he died at Metz, pillaged, robbed and ruined. In 1814 Napoléon placed little Joséphine

Schiltz, then nine years old, at Saint-Denis. Having no father or mother, no friends and no money, the poor child was not turned out of the establishment at the second return of the Bourbons. She was an under-mistress there up to 1827; but at that time her patience was exhausted and her beauty fascinated her.

When she attained her majority, Joséphine Schiltz, the Empress's goddaughter, first tasted the adventurous life of the courtesan, beguiled into that doubtful career by the fatal example of some of her comrades, penniless like herself, who congratulated themselves upon the step they had taken. She substituted an *on* for the *il* in her father's name and placed herself under the patronage of Sainte Aurélie. Being of a sprightly disposition, clever and well informed, she sinned far more than her duller companions, whose transgressions were always founded on self-interest. After divers experiences with poor but dishonest, clever but debt-ridden authors; after she had tried several rich men, who were as parsimonious as foolish; after sacrificing solid advantages to true love, and making trial of all the schools in which experience is acquired,—on a certain day when she was in the last stages of destitution and was dancing at Valentino's,—the first station on the road to Musard,—dressed in a borrowed dress and hat and cape, she attracted Arthur's attention, who had dropped in to see the famous galop! That gentleman, who was at a loss to know what passion to take up, was fascinated by her wit; and, at that

time, two years after his desertion by Béatrix, whose intellectual powers often humiliated him, no one blamed the marquis for marrying a second-hand Béatrix in the thirteenth arrondissement.*

Let us at this point glance cursorily at the four seasons of this form of bliss. It is necessary to point out that the theory of marriage in the thirteenth arrondissement applies equally to all classes. You may be a marquis of forty, or a retired shopkeeper of sixty, six times a millionaire or an annuitant—See *A Start in Life*,—great nobleman or bourgeois, the strategy of passion, making allowance for the differences inherent in the different social strata, varies but little. The heart and the money-box always maintain exact and definite relations. You may judge, therefore, the difficulties the duchess was likely to encounter in the execution of her charitable plan.

No one has an idea of the influence of epigrammatic phrases upon ordinary people in France, nor how much harm is done by the witty men who invent them. For instance, no bookkeeper could compute the total amount of the sums that have been left lying, unproductive, at the bottom of generous hearts and money-boxes, kept under lock and key because of the vulgar phrase: *Tirer une carotte!*† —This phrase has acquired such vogue that we must

* The expression *marriage in the thirteenth arrondissement*, was invented at a time when there were but twelve arrondissements in Paris, to signify living with a mistress.

† *Tirer une carotte*—to obtain something from someone by clever management or strategy.

permit it to soil this page. Moreover, if we go into the thirteenth arrondissement, we must accept its picturesque patois.

Monsieur de Rochefide, like all petty minds, was always afraid of being *carotté*.—A verb has been formed from the noun.—From the beginning of his passion for Madame Schontz, Arthur was on his guard, and was considered very much of a *rat*, to have recourse to another expression of the studios of debauchery and of the artists' studios. The word *rat*, when applied to a young girl, signifies a jolly companion, but when applied to a man, it means a niggardly host.

Madame Schontz was too clever and knew men too well not to conceive the greatest hopes from such a beginning. Monsieur de Rochfide allowed her five hundred francs a month, furnished shabbily a second floor apartment, rented at twelve hundred francs, on Rue Coquenard, and set about studying the character of his Aurélie, who furnished him with a character to study as soon as she became aware of his espionage. Rochefide was very much pleased to have fallen in with a girl endowed with such a fine character, but he saw nothing to be astonished at: her mother was a Barnheim de Bade, a *comme il faut* person! And Aurélie had been so well brought up too!—As she knew English, German and Italian, she was thoroughly versed in the literature of those countries. She could contend on even terms with pianists of the second order. And mark this! she conducted herself with regard to her talents, as

any well-bred person would—she never mentioned them. She would take up a brush at a painter's studio, put it to the canvas as a joke, and produce a head so handily as to cause general amazement. While she was pining away as under-mistress, she had put out a feeler or two in the domain of science, merely as a pastime; but her life as a kept mistress had covered these promising seeds with a cloak of salt, and naturally she gave her Arthur the credit for the fructification of the precious germs, cultivated anew for him.

Aurélie began, therefore, by displaying a disinterestedness equal to the voluptuous charm which made it possible for the little corvette to attach her grappling irons firmly to the great three-decker. Nevertheless, toward the end of the first year, she began to make outrageous noises with her heavy shoes in the antechamber, as a preliminary to entering the room where the marquis was awaiting her; and she would conceal, in such a way as to show it perfectly, the skirt of her dress, shockingly dirty. At last she succeeded so completely in convincing her *dear old papa* that her whole ambition, after so many ups and downs, was to obtain by honest means, a modest middle-class home, that, ten months after their meeting, the second phase began.

Madame Schontz was provided with a handsome suite on Rue Neuve-Saint-Georges. As Arthur could no longer conceal the fact of his great fortune, he gave her magnificent furniture, a complete service of plate, twelve hundred francs a month and

a small, low carriage with one horse,—hired, by the way,—and he yielded gracefully enough in the matter of a tiger. La Schontz was in no wise grateful to him for this munificence; she fathomed the motives of her Arthur's conduct and detected *rat*-like scheming therein. Wearied beyond measure by living at restaurants, where the food is for the most part execrable, and where the least expensive respectable dinner costs sixty francs for one, and two hundred francs if you invite three friends, Rochefide offered Madame Schontz forty francs a day for her own dinner and a friend's, everything included. Aurélie knew too much to refuse. After she had procured the acceptance of all her moral notes of hand, drawn at one year upon Monsieur de Rochefide's habits, she was listened to with favor when she demanded five hundred francs more per month for her toilet, so that she need not cover her *dear papa* with shame, as all his friends belonged to the Jockey Club.

"It would be very pretty," said she, "if Rastignac, Maxime de Trailles, D'Esgrignon, La Roche-Hugon, Ronquerolles, Laginski, Lenoncourt and the rest should find you with a Madame Éverard! Just have confidence in me, old man, and you will be the gainer!"

In truth, Aurélie took measures to display new accomplishments in this new phase. She drew a picture of herself in the rôle of housekeeper, which served her purpose admirably. With twenty-five hundred francs a month, she said, she would make

the ends of the month meet without debts,—a thing that was never seen in the Faubourg Saint-Germain of the thirteenth arrondissement, and she would give dinners infinitely superior to Nucingen's and would serve exquisite wine at ten and twelve francs the bottle. Rochefide, filled with admiration, and very well pleased to be able to invite his friends to his mistress's as often as he pleased, for it seemed to him an economical plan, said as he put his arm about her waist:

"What a treasure you are!"

Soon he hired a third of a box at the *Italiens* for her and ended by taking her to all the first nights. Recognizing the excellence of his Aurélie's advice, he began to consult her, and she allowed him to appropriate the clever remarks she made on all occasions, which, being quite new, increased his reputation as an entertaining man. At last he acquired the certainty that she loved him truly and for himself. Aurélie refused to accept the attentions of a Russian prince at a monthly stipend of five thousand francs.

"You're a lucky dog, my dear marquis," cried old Prince Galathionne, at the conclusion of a game of whist at the club. "Yesterday, when you left Madame Schontz and myself alone, I tried to supplant you; but she said to me: 'My prince, you are no handsomer, but you are older than Rochefide; you would beat me and he is like a father to me; show me the fourth part of a reason for changing! I haven't the mad passion for Arthur that I have

had for the little fools with varnished boots, whose debts I used to pay; but I love him as a virtuous wife loves her husband.' And she showed me the door."

This discourse, which had no *flower of humbug*, resulted in adding enormously to the condition of neglect and degradation that dishonored the Hôtel de Rochefide. Arthur soon passed all his time and enjoyed all his pleasures at Madame Schontz's, and very much to his advantage he found it; for, at the end of three years, he had four hundred thousand francs to invest.

The third phase began. Madame Schontz became the most affectionate of mothers to Arthur's son, she went to his college to fetch him and took him back herself; she overwhelmed the child with sweetmeats and toys and money, and he called her his *little mamma* and worshiped her. She took a hand in the management of her Arthur's fortune, she made him purchase consols at a low figure just before the famous Treaty of London which overthrew the ministry of the first of March. Arthur made two hundred thousand francs, and Aurélie did not ask for a sou. Like the gentleman he was, Rochefide invested his six hundred thousand francs in shares of the Bank, and put half of them in the name of Mademoiselle Joséphine Schiltz. A small house on Rue de la Bruyère was hired and put in the hands of Grindot, the great architect in small matters, with orders to make of it a sumptuous *bonbonnière*. Thenceforward Rochefide had no money dealings

with Madame Schontz, who received her own revenues and paid the bills.

Having become his wife—on trust—she justified the title by making her *dear papa* happier than ever; she had learned his whims and gratified them, as Madame de Pompadour gratified the whims of Louis XV. She was at last titular mistress, absolute mistress. Thereupon, she took the liberty of patronizing charming young men, artists, men of letters newly born to glory, who denied both ancients and moderns, and tried to make great reputations for themselves while doing little or nothing.

Madame Schontz's conduct, a masterpiece of clever tactics, should make plain to you her superior understanding. In the first place, ten or twelve young men entertained Arthur, furnished him with shafts of wit, with shrewd opinions upon all sorts of subjects, and did not throw suspicion on the fidelity of the mistress of the house; in the second place, they looked upon her as an eminently clever woman. Thus these living advertisements, these peripatetic newspaper articles, caused Madame Schontz to be known as the most agreeable woman to be found along the line that separates the thirteenth arrondissement from the other twelve. Her rivals, Suzanne Gaillard, who, after 1838, had the advantage over her of having become a wife by a lawful marriage—necessary pleonasm to describe an insoluble, legitimate alliance—Fanny Beaupré, Mariette, Antonia, spread reports more slanderous than amusing, concerning the beauty of these young men

and Monsieur de Rochefide's good-natured treatment of them.

Madame Schontz, who could distance by three *blagues*, she said, the collective wit of those ladies, said to them one evening at a supper party given by Nathan at Florine's house, after the Bal de l'Opéra, having explained to them her fortune and her success: "Do the same yourselves!"—a remark which they remembered.

During that period, Madame Schontz caused the race-horses to be sold, influenced by considerations for which she was indebted in all probability to the critical mind of Claude Vignon, one of her intimates.

"I can understand," she said one evening, after she had lashed the horses with satirical remarks for a long while, "that princes and very rich men might become fond of horse-racing, but for the purpose of promoting the welfare of the country and not to satisfy the puerile whims of a gambler's conceit. If you had breeding establishments on your estates, if you raised ten or twelve hundred horses every year, if everyone raced the best horses in his stud, if all the studs in France and Navarre took part in every function, it would be a fine, grand thing; but you buy horses, just as theatre managers make contracts with actors, you degrade an institution until it is nothing but a gambling affair, you have a Bourse for dealing in legs just as you have a Bourse for consols! It isn't worthy of you. I suppose you spend sixty thousand francs for the pleasure of reading in the newspapers: Monsieur

de Rochefide's LELIA won from Monsieur le Duc de Rhétoré's FLEUR-DE-GENÊT by a length?—It would be much better to give that money to the poets, and they would send you to immortality in verse or prose, like the late lamented Montyon!"

The marquis was at last goaded into realizing the ravages of the turf, and the possibility of economizing to the extent of sixty thousand francs; so that Madame Schontz said to him the following year:

"I don't cost you anything now, Arthur!"

Many rich men envied the marquis the possession of Madame Schontz at this time, and tried to take her from him; but, like the Russian prince, their old age was wasted upon her.

"Listen, my dear fellow," said she to Finot, who had become very wealthy, "I am sure that Rochefide would forgive me a wee bit of a passion if I should fall madly in love with anyone, and no woman ever leaves a marquis who's such a good fellow as that for a parvenu like you. You could not keep me in the position Arthur has given me; he has made a half *comme il faut* woman of me, and you could never do that even by marrying me."

This was the last nail that riveted the irons upon the lucky galley-slave. The words reached the absent ears for which they were intended.

Thereupon began the fourth phase, that of *habit*, the final victory of these carefully planned campaigns, which causes a woman of this sort to say of a man: "I have him now!"

Rochefide, who had just purchased the little house

in the name of Mademoiselle Joséphine Schiltz—a trifle of eighty thousand francs—had, at the time the duchess's project took shape, reached the point of being vain of his mistress, whom he called Ninon II., commemorating thus her unbending probity, her excellent manners, her knowledge and her wit. His good and bad qualities, his tastes and his pleasures were all summed up in Madame Schontz, and he had reached that time of life when, whether through weariness or indifference or philosophy, a man ceases to change, and clings to his wife or his mistress, as the case may be.

The position acquired in five years by Madame Schontz will be realized when we say that in order to be presented to her, it was necessary that one's name should be proposed a long while beforehand. She had refused to receive tiresome rich men and men with unsavory reputations; she relaxed her rigorous policy in favor of none but the great names of the aristocracy.

"They have the right to be donkeys," she would say, "because they are *comme il faut* donkeys!"

She possessed, ostensibly, the three hundred thousand francs given her by Rochefide, which a broker and *good fellow*, Gobenheim—the only one of his trade who was admitted to her house—invested for her; but she handled with her own hands a little secret fortune of two hundred thousand francs consisting of what she had saved in three years, and of the profits accruing from the constant turning over of the three hundred thousand francs, which she was

known to possess, for she never admitted the e
ence of any more than that sum.

"The more you make, the poorer you gro
Gobenheim said to her one day.

"Water is so dear!" she retorted.

The amount of the hidden treasure was incre
by the value of jewels and diamonds, which
would wear for a month and then sell, and by s
given her in payment for past caprices. When
ple called her rich, Madame Schontz replied th
the rate of interest paid on consols, three hun
thousand francs yielded twelve thousand a y
and that she had spent as much as that in her
destitute days, when she loved Lousteau.

This line of conduct indicated a definite plan,
such a plan Madame Schontz had, you may be s
She had been jealous for two years of Madam
Bruel and was consumed with ambition to be
ried at the mayor's office and the church.
social ranks have their forbidden fruit, a mere tr
developed by desire until it is as heavy as the wo

This ambition was necessarily increased two
by the ambition of a second Arthur, whom
amount of watching could discover. Bixiou insi
that the favored individual was the painter Léo
Lora, the painter would have it that it was Bix
who was past forty and should have been think
of settling down. Suspicion also fell upon Victo
Vernisset, a young poet of the school of Cana
whose passion for Madame Schontz amounted to
lirium; and the poet accused Stidmann, a sculp

of being his fortunate rival. This last-named artist, a very pretty fellow, worked for the goldsmiths, the dealers in bronzes and the jewelers; he aspired to be a second Benvenuto Cellini. Claude Vignon, the young Comte de la Palférine, Gobenheim, Vermanton, a cynical philosopher, and other habitués of this attractive salon, were brought under suspicion one by one, and acquitted. No one of them all was the equal of Madame Schontz, not even Rochefide, who believed that she had a weakness for the young and clever La Palférine; she was virtuous by design, and was thinking of nothing but making an advantageous marriage.

Only one man of doubtful reputation was to be seen at Madame Schontz's; that man was Couture, who had more than once made the operators on the Bourse howl; but Couture was one of Madame Schontz's first friends, and she alone was faithful to him. The false alarm of 1840 spirited away the last remaining capital of this speculator, who believed in the adroitness of the first of March ministry; Aurélie, seeing that he was depressed, made Rochefide take a turn on the other side of the market, as we have seen. She it was who dubbed this last disaster of the inventor of premiums and limited liability companies, a *découture*.

Overjoyed to find his cover always laid at Aurélie's, Couture, to whom Finot, the shrewdest, or, if you please, the luckiest of all parvenus, gave a thousand-franc note from time to time, was the only man who was sufficiently far-seeing to offer

Madame Schontz his name; whereupon she made a study of him, to ascertain whether the bold speculator had the power to hew out a path for himself in politics, and sufficient gratitude not to desert his wife. Couture was a man of about forty-three years, very badly used up, whose birth did not redeem the evil notoriety of his name; he seldom spoke of the authors of his being.

Madame Schontz was bewailing the scarcity of capable men, when Couture himself presented to her a provincial who was furnished with the two handles by which women take hold of jugs of this sort when they intend to keep them.

To sketch this personage will be to describe a considerable portion of the youth of the present day. In this instance, therefore, the digression will be history.

In 1838, Fabien du Ronceret, the son of a President of one of the divisions of the Royal Court of Caen who had died a year before, left the city of Alençon after resigning his position as magistrate in which his father had compelled him to throw away his time, as he said,—and came to Paris with the purpose of making his way there by dint of creating a sensation; a Norman idea, difficult to carry out, for he had barely eight thousand francs a year, his mother being still alive and having a life interest in a very valuable piece of real estate in the centre of Alençon. The young man had, in several previous trips to Paris, tried the strength of his rope as a mountebank, and detected the great defect in the social

patchwork of 1830; wherefore he expected to work it to his own profit, following the example of the Machiavels of the bourgeoisie. This calls for a cursory glance at one of the results of the new order of things.

Modern equality, developed beyond all measure in our days, has necessarily developed in private life, upon a line parallel to political life, pride, self-esteem, vanity, the three great divisions of the social *ego*. Fools seek to pass for men of intelligence, men of intelligence seek to pass for men of talent, men of talent wish to be treated as men of genius; as for the men of genius, they are more reasonable and consent to be nothing more than demigods. This tendency of the public mind of the present day, which sends to the Chamber the manufacturer who is jealous of the statesman, and the public official who is jealous of the poet, leads fools to disparage men of intelligence, men of intelligence to disparage men of talent, men of talent to disparage those of their number who gain an inch or two upon them, and demigods to threaten existing institutions, the throne, everything in short that does not fall down and worship them unconditionally. As soon as a nation has, very unwisely, beaten down all recognized social superiority, it opens flood-gates, through which rushes a torrent of secondary ambitions, the very least of which is none the less determined to be first; it had in its aristocracy an evil, so the democrats say, but a well-defined, circumscribed evil; it exchanges it for

ten conflicting, armed aristocracies, the most lam
able of conditions. In proclaiming the equalit
all men, the *Declaration of the Rights of Envy*
promulgated. We are enjoying to-day the sa
nalia of the Revolution transported into the a
rently peaceful domain of intellect, trade
politics; and so it seems that reputations du
hard work, to services rendered, to talent, are p
ileges accorded at the expense of the masses.
Agrarian Law will soon be extended to the fiel
glory. Never, at any time, have men demanded
selection of their names from the public winnow
table for more puerile reasons. They strive
notoriety at any price, by making themselves rid
lous, by affecting devotion to the cause of Pola
to the penitentiary system, to the question of
future of liberated convicts, to little sinners ab
or below the age of twelve, to all forms of so
misery. These divers manias require the creat
of posts of sham dignity,—presidents, vice-pr
dents and secretaries of societies exceeding
number, in Paris, the social problems they are se
ing to solve. The great social body has b
demolished to construct innumerable little ones a
the image of the defunct. Do not these paras
organizations indicate decomposition? is it not
swarming of worms toward the corpse? All th
social bodies are daughters of the same mother, v
ity. Not thus do Catholic charity or genu
benevolence proceed; they study the evils at
fountain head and apply remedies, and do

declaim in public upon morbific germs for the pleasure of declaiming.

Fabien du Ronceret, although he was not a man of superior capacity, had divined by the exercise of the miserly talent peculiar to Normandie, all the profit he might reap from this public vice. Every epoch has its special characteristics which adroit men turn to account. Fabien thought only of making people talk about him.

"My dear fellow, you must make people talk about you if you want to amount to anything!" he said to his father's friend Du Bousquier, the king of Alençon, as he took leave of him. "Six months hence I shall be better known than you!"

Fabien thus translated the spirit of the time; he did not seek to dominate it, but simply obeyed it. He began his career in Bohemia, a district in the moral topography of Paris—See *A Prince of Bohemia*, SCENES OF PARISIAN LIFE,—where he was known as *The Heir*, because of some premeditated extravagances. Du Ronceret had profited by Couture's infatuation with pretty Madame Cadine, one of the new actresses who was considered a very talented artist at one of the secondary theatres, and for whom, during his ephemeral opulence, he had hired and furnished a lovely little ground-floor suite with a garden, on Rue Blanche.

Du Ronceret and Couture became acquainted in this way. The Norman, who chose to take his splendor ready-made, purchased Couture's furniture and the permanent improvements he was obliged

to leave in the establishment—a kiosk in which they smoked, a rustic wooden gallery, covered with Indian matting and embellished with pottery, by which to reach the kiosk in rainy weather. When The Heir was complimented on his apartment, he called it his *den*. The provincial was careful to say that Grindot, the architect, had displayed all his cunning there, as Stidmann had in the sculptures and Léon de Lora in the paintings; for his capital fault was that self-esteem which does not stop short of falsehood in its desire to aggrandize itself.

The Heir rounded out his magnificence by a conservatory which he built along a wall with a southern exposure—not because he loved flowers, but because he proposed to attack public opinion through horticulture. At the time of which we write, he had almost attained his object. Having become vice-president of some horticultural society, presided over by the Duc de Wissembourg, brother of the Prince de Chiavari, younger son of the late Maréchal Vernon, he had adorned his vice-presidential coat with the ribbon of the Legion of Honor, after an exhibition, at which the opening discourse, purchased for five hundred francs from Lousteau, was boldly delivered by him as the offspring of his own brain. He received honorable mention for a flower which old Blondet at Alençon, Emile Blondet's father, had *given* him, and which he exhibited as having been grown in his greenhouse.

This success was nothing. The Heir, who aspired to be acknowledged as a man of mind, had

formed the plan of allying himself with illustrious men in order to shine in the reflected light of their glory—a plan not easily put in execution, when based upon a budget of only eight thousand francs. So Fabien du Ronceret applied to Bixiou, Stidmann and Léon de Lora, one after another and unsuccessfully, to be presented to Madame Schontz and become one of her menagerie of lions of all species. He paid for Couture's dinners so often that Couture demonstrated to Madame Schontz categorically that she ought to add such an original creature to her assortment, were it only to make of him one of those fashionable valets without wages whom the mistresses of households employ upon commissions which they can find no paid servants to undertake.

In three evenings, Madame Schontz read Fabien like an open book, and said to herself:

"If Couture doesn't suit me I am sure of getting a saddle on this fellow. Now, my future stands on two feet!"

Thus, this idiot of whom everybody made sport became the favorite, but with a purpose in view on Aurélie's part that made the preference an insult; and the very improbability of this selection prevented its being even suspected. Madame Schontz intoxicated Fabien with stealthy smiles and with little scenes enacted on the threshold as she escorted him to the door, when everybody had gone save Monsieur de Rochefide. She often made Fabien the third with Arthur in her box at the *Italiens* and at first nights; she explained her action by saying

that he had rendered her this or that service and that she did not know how else to repay him.

Men have a fatuous ambition, which, by the way, they share with women, to be loved absolutely. Now, of all flattering passions, none is more highly prized than that of a Madame Schontz for him she honors with a love called heart-love, to distinguish it from the other variety. A woman like Madame Schontz, who played at being a great lady, and who was really a superior woman, should have been and was a subject of pride to Fabien, who became enamored of her to such a degree that he never presented himself before her except in full dress, with varnished boots, straw-colored gloves, frilled and embroidered shirt, waistcoats more and more elaborate,—in short with all the symptoms of profound adoration. A month prior to the duchess's conference with her spiritual director, Madame Schontz had confided the secret of her birth and her real name to Fabien, who did not understand the object of the confidence. A fortnight later, Madame Schontz, amazed at the Norman's lack of intelligence, exclaimed:

"What an idiot I am! he fancies that I love him for himself!"

And she thereupon took The Heir to the Bois in her *calèche*—for she had had for a year past, a little *calèche* and a little low carriage for two horses.

In this public tête-à-tête, she discussed the question of her future and declared her purpose of marrying.

"I have seven hundred thousand francs," said she; "I tell you frankly that, if I should meet a man running over with ambition, who was capable of understanding my character, I would change my position; for you know what my dream is? I would like to be a worthy bourgeois matron, to enter an honest family and make my husband and children happy!"

The Norman was very willing to be distinguished by Madame Schontz; but as to marrying her—that act of folly seemed of questionable expediency to a bachelor of thirty-eight who had been made a magistrate by the Revolution of July. Observing his hesitation, Madame Schontz took The Heir for the target of her epigrams, her witticisms and her contempt, and turned to Couture. In a week, the speculator, whom she allowed to smell her cash-box, offered her his hand, his heart and his future, three objects of equal value.

Madame Schontz's manœuvres had reached this point when Madame de Grandlieu began her investigations into the life and morals of the Béatrix of Rue Saint-Georges.

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Acting upon Abbé Brossette's advice, the duchess begged the Marquis d'Ajuda to bring her the king of political cutthroats, the famous Comte Maxime de Trailles, the archduke of Bohemia, the youngest of young men, although he was fifty years old. Monsieur d'Ajuda arranged to dine with Maxime at the club on Rue de Beaune, and suggested to him that they go and play dummy whist with the Duc de Grandlieu, who had been taken with the gout before dinner and was all alone.

Although the Duc de Grandlieu's son-in-law and the duchess's cousin had a perfect right to present him in a salon in which he had never stepped foot, Maxime de Trailles indulged in no illusions as to the significance of such an invitation; he knew that either the duke or duchess needed him. This club-life, in which you play cards with people you do not receive at your house, is not one of the least striking features of these days of ours.

The Duc de Grandlieu did Maxime the honor to seem to be in pain. After fifteen games of whist, he went to bed, leaving his wife with Maxime and D'Ajuda. The duchess, seconded by the marquis, communicated her scheme to Monsieur de Trailles, and asked his collaboration while seeming to ask his advice only. Maxime listened to the end without expressing an opinion and waited, before speaking,

until the duchess had directly invited his co-operation.

"Madame, I understand it all perfectly," he then said, after bestowing upon the duchess and the marquis one of those shrewd, profound, astute, eloquent glances by which such great rakes as he know how to compromise those with whom they are talking. "D'Ajuda will tell you that if anyone in Paris can conduct this double negotiation, I am the man to do it, without involving you in it at all, without even letting it be known that I came here tonight. But, first of all, let us arrange the preliminaries of Léoben. How much do you expect to sacrifice?"

"Whatever is necessary."

"Very good, Madame la Duchesse. In that case, as a reward of my efforts, you will do me the honor to receive at your house and to take under your wing, in good faith, Madame la Comtesse de Trailles."

"You, married?" cried D'Ajuda.

"A fortnight hence I am to marry the heiress of a rich but excessively bourgeois family—a sacrifice to my opinions! I espouse the cause of my government, root and branch! I propose to take on a new skin. Therefore Madame la Duchesse will understand what a momentous thing it would be for me to have my wife taken up by her and her family. I am certain of becoming a deputy after my father-in-law resigns his present post, and I have the promise of a diplomatic appointment in harmony

with my new fortunes. I do not see why my wife should not be as well received as Madame de Portenduère in that circle of young women in which the shining lights are Mesdames de la Bastie, Georges de Maufrigneuse, De l'Estorade, Du Guénic, D'Ajuda, De Restaud, De Rastignac and De Vandenesse! My wife is pretty and I will undertake to make her elegant—Do you agree to that, Madame la Duchesse? You are a religious woman, and if you say yes, your promise, which I know to be sacred, will assist me materially in my change of life. It will be one more good deed to your credit!—Alas! I have long been the king of ne'er-do-wells; but I propose to have done with that life. After all, we have borne *azure with the chimera or, spitting fire, armed gules, and scales sinople with crest counter ermine*, since François I., who thought it necessary to ennoble Louis XI.'s *valet de chambre*, and we have been counts since Catherine de' Medici."

"I will receive your wife and take her under my protection," said the duchess solemnly, "and my friends will not turn their backs on her, I give you my word."

"Ah! Madame la Duchesse," cried Maxime, visibly moved, "if Monsieur le Duc will also condescend to be gracious to me, I promise, for my part, that your plan shall succeed without any great expense to you. But," he continued after a pause, "you must agree to follow my instructions. This is the last intrigue of my bachelor life, and it should

be the more skilfully handled because a worthy result is sought," he said, with a smile.

"Follow your instructions?" said the duchess. "Then I am to appear in this matter, am I?"

"Ah! madame, I will not compromise you," cried Maxime, "and I esteem you too highly to demand security for myself. It is simply a matter of following my advice. For example, Du Guénic must be led about like a holy object by his wife, he must be absent two years, she must show him Switzerland, Italy, Germany—in fact, as many countries as possible—"

"Ah! you answer an objection raised by my confessor," cried the duchess, ingenuously, remembering the judicious observation of Abbé Brossette.

Maxime and D'Ajuda could not restrain a smile at the thought of this concert of opinion between heaven and hell.

"To prevent Madame de Rochefide from seeing Calyste again, we will all go abroad together, Juste and his wife, Calyste and Sabine, and myself. I will leave Clotilde with her father."

"Let us not sing songs of victory yet, madame," said Maxime; "I foresee enormous difficulties, but I shall overcome them beyond doubt. Your esteem and your patronage are a price that will make me do some very dirty things; but they—"

"Dirty things?" the duchess repeated, interrupting this modern *condottiere*, and exhibiting as much disgust as amazement on her features.

"And you will be soiled with them, too, madame,

as I am your agent. Why, are you ignorant of the degree of blindness to which Madame de Rochefide has reduced your son-in-law? I know all about it from Nathan and Canalis, between whom she was hesitating when Calyste jumped into the lioness's mouth! Béatrix has succeeded in convincing the gallant Breton that she has never loved anyone but him, that she is virtuous, that her passion for Conti was a head passion in which the heart and the rest of it took little part,—a musical passion in fact! As to Rochefide, that was duty. And so, you see, she is a virgin! She proves it to him by not remembering her son; for a year past she has not made the slightest effort to see him. The young count will soon be twelve years old, and Madame Schontz is the best kind of a mother to him, because maternity is a passion with women like her, you know. Du Guénic would be cut to pieces himself and would cut his wife to pieces for Béatrix! And do you fancy that it's a simple matter to extricate a man when he's at the bottom of the gulf of credulity?—Why, madame, Iago would waste all his handkerchiefs on him! It is supposed that Othello, his younger brother Orosmane, Saint-Preux, René, Werther, and other lovers of renown, represent love! Why, their frosty-hearted creators never knew what absolute love is. Molière alone had a suspicion of it. Love, Madame la Duchesse, is not loving a noble woman, a Clarissa, God save the mark! Love is saying to one's self: 'The woman I love is an infamous creature, she deceives me and

will deceive me, she's a dissipated wretch, she smells of all the cookery of hell,' and then running to her and finding in her the pure azure of the sky and the flowers of paradise. That is how Molière loved, that is how we sinners love; for I always weep over the great scene in *Arnolphe!*—And that's how your son-in-law loves Béatrix!—I shall have trouble in separating Rochefide from Madame Schontz, but Madame Schontz will undoubtedly accede to the plan; I will see how matters stand in her household. As to Calyste and Béatrix, we must resort to the axe, treachery of a superior kind and such base infamy, that your virtuous imagination would never descend to it, unless your spiritual director gives you his hand. You have asked for the impossible and you shall have it. But, despite my resolution to use fire and steel, I do not absolutely promise success. I know lovers who do not recoil before the most ghastly disillusionments. You are too virtuous to realize the empire acquired by women who are not virtuous."

"Don't begin these infamous proceedings until I have consulted Abbé Brossette to make sure how far I can be considered your accomplice in them," cried the duchess, with a naïve frankness that showed how much selfishness there is in piety.

"You shall know nothing at all about them, my dear mother," said the Marquis d'Ajuda.

As they stood on the stoop waiting for the marquis's carriage, he said to Maxime:

"You frightened the good duchess."

"But she has no idea of the difficulty of what she asks!—Shall we go to the Jockey Club? I must make Rochefide invite me to dine at La Schontz's to-morrow; for before I sleep to-night my plans will be laid and I shall have selected the pawns to be used in the game of chess I am about to play. In the days of her splendor, Béatrix would not receive me; I will settle my account with her and avenge your sister-in-law so cruelly that she may think she is avenged too much."

The next day Rochefide informed Madame Schontz that Maxime de Trailles would dine with them. That was equivalent to giving her notice to display her magnificence and to prepare the most exquisite of repasts for that connoisseur *emeritus* whom all women of Madame Schontz's class held in dread; so she paid as much attention to her toilet as to putting her house in condition to receive that formidable personage.

In Paris, there are almost as many royalties as there are different arts, sciences, professions and moral specialties; and the most powerful of those who practice the trade of royalty, has a majesty that is all his own; he is appreciated and respected by his peers, who know the difficulties of the trade, and whose admiration is accorded to him who can make a plaything of it.

Maxime was, in the eyes of *rats* and courtesans, an exceedingly influential and capable man, for he had succeeded in inspiring prodigious passions. He was admired by all those who know how hard it is

to live in Paris on good terms with one's creditors; in fact, he had no rival in elegance, good form and wit except the illustrious De Marsay, who had employed him in some political missions. This will suffice to explain his interview with the duchess, his prestige with Madame Schontz, and his authoritative manner of speech in a forthcoming conference on Boulevard des Italiens with a young man already famous, although a new arrival in the Bohemia of Paris.

The next morning, as he was dressing, Maxime de Trailles was informed of the arrival of Finot, to whom he had written the night before; he requested him to arrange, as if by chance, a breakfast at the Café Anglais, so that he could hear Couture, Lousteau and Finot himself gossip. Finot, whose relations with the Comte de Trailles were similar to those of a sub-lieutenant with a marshal of France, could refuse him nothing; moreover, it was dangerous sport to stick pins into that lion. And so, when Maxime went to the café for his breakfast, he found Finot and his two friends at table; the conversation had already veered around to Madame Schontz. Couture, under the skilful handling of Finot and of Lousteau, who seconded Finot's design unwittingly, gave the Comte de Trailles all the information he desired concerning Madame Schontz.

About one o'clock Maxime stood chewing his toothpick and talking with Du Tillet on the steps at Tortoni's, where the little Bourse, a sort of preface to the Bourse itself, is held by certain speculators.

He seemed deeply engrossed in business, but he was waiting for the young Comte de la Palférine, who was certain to pass that way before long. Boulevard des Italiens is to-day what Pont Neuf was in 1650,—everybody of consequence traverses it at least once a day.

In fact, within ten minutes, Maxime dropped Du Tillet's arm, and nodded to the young prince of Bohemia, saying with a smile:

"A word with you, count!"

The two rivals, one a declining star, the other a rising sun, took their seats upon four chairs in front of the Café de Paris. Maxime was careful to select a seat at some distance from a number of old fellows, who habitually arrange themselves like espaliers about one o'clock in the afternoon, to burn out their rheumatic affections. He had excellent reasons for distrusting old men.—See *A Man of Business*. SCENES OF PARISIAN LIFE.

"Have you any debts?" Maxime asked the young count.

"If I had none, should I be worthy to succeed you?" retorted La Palférine.

"By asking you that question, I do not mean to imply any doubt as to the fact," Maxime rejoined; "I simply want to know if the total is a respectable amount, and if it goes to five or six!"

"Six what?"

"Six figures! whether you owe fifty thousand or a hundred thousand?—I have owed as much as six hundred thousand myself!"

La Palférine took off his hat with an air no less respectful than jocose.

"If my credit were good enough to enable me to borrow a hundred thousand francs," said he, "I would forget my creditors and pass my life in Venice among the chefs-d'œuvre of art, at the theatre in the evening, with pretty women at night, and—"

"And what would you be at my age?" queried Maxime.

"I shouldn't live to your age," the young count retorted.

Maxime returned his rival's courtesy by raising his hat slightly with a laughably solemn gesture.

"There is another way of looking at life," he replied, in the tone one connoisseur might use to another. "You owe—?"

"Oh! a paltry sum worthy to be confessed to my uncle; if I had one, he would disinherit me on account of the contemptible figure; six thousand!"

"A man is more annoyed by six than by a hundred thousand francs," said Maxime sententiously. "La Palférine! you have a bold mind, you have even more mind than boldness, you can go very far, become an eminent politician. Look you—of all those who have started in the career, the end of which I have now reached, and who have been put forward in opposition to me, you are the only one who has ever made a pleasant impression on me."

La Palférine blushed, he was so flattered by this admission, made with graceful affability by the

chief of Parisian adventurers. This instinctive impulse of his conceit was an acknowledgment of his inferiority which wounded him, but Maxime divined the reaction that was sure to follow in a nature endowed with such quick intelligence, and he remedied the difficulty at once by throwing himself upon the young man's mercy.

"Are you willing to do something for me, who am about withdrawing from the Olympic arena by reason of an advantageous marriage? I will do much for you."

"You will make me very proud; it is a realization of the fable of *The Lion and the Mouse,*" said La Palférine.

"I will begin by loaning you twenty thousand francs," continued Maxime.

"Twenty thousand francs?—I knew that if I walked up and down this boulevard often enough, I—" said La Palférine, by way of parenthesis.

"My dear fellow, we must put you on a respectable footing," said Maxime with a smile; "don't remain on two feet, have six; do as I do; I have never alighted from my tilbury—"

"But, in that case, you must be intending to ask me something beyond my abilities!"

"No, it's a matter of ingratiating yourself with a woman in a fortnight."

"Is it a harlot?"

"Why?"

"That would be impossible; but if it were a very *comme il faut* woman, bright and—"

"It is a most illustrious marchioness!"

"You want to get her letters?" queried the young count.

"Ah! you strike at my heart!" cried Maxime. "No, that's not it."

"Then I must love her?"

"Yes, in the real meaning of the word."

"If I am to depart from the æsthetic, it is altogether impossible," said La Palférine. "I have some sense of probity with regard to women, you see: we can break them on the wheel, but not—"

"Ah! then I have not been misinformed!" cried Maxime. "Do you think I am a man to suggest petty two-sou infamies to you.—No, you must go on, you must dazzle, you must conquer.—My boy, I will give you twenty thousand francs to-night and ten days to win the victory. Farewell until to-night at Madame Schontz's."

"I dine there."

"Good," said Maxime. "Later, if you have need of me, Monsieur le Comte, you will know where to find me," he added, in the tone of a king who gives pledges instead of promising.

"Has this poor woman injured you very seriously?" asked La Palférine.

"Don't try to drop the lead in my waters, my boy, and let me tell you that, in case you are successful, you will find such powerful protectors that you will be able, like me, to take refuge in a good marriage when you are tired of your Bohemian life."

"So the time does come when one tires of amusing one's self, of being nothing in particular, of living like the birds, of hunting in the streets of Paris like savages, and of laughing at everything?—"

"Everything is tiresome, even hell," laughed Maxime. "Until this evening."

The two roués, the young and the old, rose from their seats.

"Madame d'Espard can't endure Béatrix; she will help me," said Maxime to himself, as he returned to his one-horse vehicle.—"To the Hôtel de Grandlieu," he cried to his coachman, as he saw Rastignac passing.

Show me a great man without his weaknesses!—Maxime found the duchess, Madame du Guénic and Clotilde, all in tears.

"What's the matter?" he asked the duchess.

"Calyste didn't come home last night; it was the first time, and my poor Sabine is in despair."

"Madame la Duchesse," said Maxime, leading the pious woman into a window recess, "in the name of God who will judge us, observe the most profound secrecy as to my devotion, make D'Ajuda promise that Calyste shall know nothing of our plots, or we shall have a duel to the death. When I told you that it wouldn't cost you very much, I meant that you would not have to expend any outrageous sums; I must have about twenty thousand francs, but all the rest is my affair; we must be able to dispose of some important offices, perhaps a receiver-generalship."

The duchess and Maxime left the room. When the former returned to her two daughters, she heard a new dithyramb from Sabine interlarded with domestic incidents even more cruel than those which had brought the young wife's happiness to an end.

"Set your mind at rest, darling," said the duchess to her daughter; "Béatrix will pay dearly for your tears and your suffering; Satan's hand is upon her and she will undergo ten humiliations for every one of yours!"

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Madame Schontz notified Claude Vignon, who had several times manifested a desire to know Maxime de Trailles personally; she invited Couture, Fabien, Bixiou, Léon de Lora, La Palférine and Nathan. The last-named was invited at Rochefide's request on Maxime's account. Aurélie thus had nine guests, all of the first force intellectually, except Du Ronceret, but The Heir's Norman vanity and brutal ambition placed him on the level of the literary power of Claude Vignon, the poetic talent of Nathan, the finesse of La Palférine, the financial shrewdness of Couture, the wit of Bixiou, the selfish scheming of Finot, the profundity of Maxime, and the genius of Léon de Lora.

Madame Schontz, whose object it was to appear young and beautiful, armed herself with a toilet such as only women of her sort know how to make. It consisted of a lace pelerine of spider's web fineness, a blue velvet dress, with a glovelike waist buttoned with opals, and hair arranged in bandeaux that glistened like ebony. Madame Schontz owed her celebrity as a pretty woman to the brilliancy and freshness of a warm, white complexion like a Creole's, to the abundance of details indicating keen intelligence, to the resolute, clean-cut features, of which the most illustrious example was for so long a time the Comtesse Merlin, and which may be said

to be peculiar to Southern faces. Unfortunately, little Madame Schontz had developed a tendency to stoutness since her life had become tranquil and happy. The neck, seductively round and plump, was beginning to thicken, as were the shoulders. The head is so essentially the part of a woman on which men feast in France, that a lovely head will overcome a misshapen body a long while.

"My dear child," said Maxime, as he entered the salon and kissed Madame Schontz on the forehead, "Rochefide was anxious to show me your establishment, which I have never yet seen; it seems to be almost consonant with his four hundred thousand a year.—Upon my word, if he had wanted fifty thousand he couldn't have raised it, when he first knew you, and in less than five years you have put him in the way of making what another, a Malaga, an Antonia, Cadine or Florentine, would have run through for him."

"I am not a courtesan, I am an artist!" said Madame Schontz with a sort of dignity. "I hope to end, as they say in the play, by being the first of a race of honest folk."

"This is a desperate state of affairs—we are all marrying," said Maxime, throwing himself into an easy-chair by the fire. "Here am I on the eve of taking a Comtesse Maxime."

"Oh! how I would like to see her!" cried Madame Schontz. "But permit me to present Monsieur Claude Vignon.—Monsieur Claude Vignon, Monsieur de Trailles!"

"Ah! it was you who allowed Camille Maupin, the hostess of literary people to go into a convent, was it not?" cried Maxime. "After you, God!—I have never received such honor. Mademoiselle des Touches treated you, monsieur, like Louis XIV."

"And that is how history is written!" replied Vignon. "Don't you know that her fortune went to redeem Monsieur du Guénic's estates?—If she knew that Calyste is in her ex-friend's clutches—" Maxime touched the critic's foot and pointed to Monsieur de Rochefide—"I believe she would leave her convent to rescue him from her."

"On my word, Rochefide, my friend," said Maxime, when he saw that Claude paid no heed to his warning, "if I were you I would give my wife's fortune back to her, so that it shouldn't be thought in society that she clings to Calyste from necessity."

"Maxime is right," said Madame Schontz, looking at Arthur who was as red as scarlet. "If I have increased your income a few thousand francs, you could find no better way to employ them. I should have assured the happiness of the wife and the husband; what a feather in my cap!"

"I had never thought of it," the marquis replied; "but one must be a gentleman before being a husband."

"Let me tell you when it is time to be generous," said Maxime.

"Arthur," said Aurélie, "Maxime is right.—You see, my good man, our generous actions are like

Couture's shares—*actions*—" she added, looking in the mirror to see who was just arriving, "we must invest in them at the proper time."

Couture was accompanied by Finot. In a few moments, all the guests were assembled in the beautiful blue and gold salon of the Hôtel Schontz; such was the name the artists had given to their open house since Rochefide had purchased it for his Ninon II.

When La Palférine, who was the last to arrive, entered the room, Maxime went to him, led him into a window recess, and handed him the twenty banknotes.

"Above all things, my boy, don't spare them," he said with the grace peculiar to *roués*.

"Nobody has the talent that you have of doubling the value of what you seem to give!" replied La Palférine.

"Have you decided?"

"Of course, since I take the wage," replied the young count, with an air of hauteur mingled with raillery.

"Very well, Nathan here will present you within a day or two to Madame la Marquise de Rochefide," he said in his ear.

La Palférine started back when he heard the name.

"Don't fail to say that you are madly in love with her; and, in order not to arouse suspicion, drink wine and liqueurs till you drop! I will tell Aurélie to put you beside Nathan. But, my boy, we must meet every morning at one o'clock on Boulevard de

la Madeleine, you to tell me of your progress, and I to give you your instructions."

"I will be there, my master," said the young count, bowing.

"How is it that you ask us to dine with a fellow dressed like the head waiter at a restaurant?" said Maxime in Madame Schontz's ear, pointing to Du Ronceret.

"What! have you never seen The Heir? Du Ronceret of Alençon."

"Monsieur," said Maxime to Fabien, "you must know my friend D'Esgrignon?"

"It's a long time now since Victurnien dropped my acquaintance," Fabien replied; "but we were very intimate in our early youth."

The dinner was one of those that are given only at Paris, and by the queens of debauchery, for their sumptuous elegance surprises the most critical. It was at a similar repast, given by a courtesan, rich and beautiful like Madame Schontz, that Paganini declared that he had never feasted so royally at any sovereign's table, nor drunk such wines at any prince's, nor heard such clever conversation, nor seen good taste and elegance so coquettishly displayed.

Maxime and Madame Schontz returned first to the salon, about ten o'clock, leaving the rest of the guests, who no longer took the trouble to gloss over their anecdotes and vaunt their good qualities, gluing their viscous lips to the rims of the little glasses, which they could not empty.

"Well, my dear," said Maxime, "you are not mistaken; yes, I come on account of your lovely eyes; it's an important matter; you must leave Arthur, but I will promise that he'll give you two hundred thousand francs."

"Why should I leave the poor fellow, pray?"

"To marry that imbecile who has come from Alençon for the express purpose. He has already been a judge and I will see that he is made president in the place of Blondet's father, who is close upon eighty-two years old; and, if you know how to sail your boat, your husband will become a deputy. You will be a personage and you can crush Madame la Comtesse de Bruel—"

"Never," said Madame Schontz, "she's a countess."

"Is he of the stuff counts are made of?"

"Well, he has a coat of arms," said Aurélie, taking a letter from a magnificent letter-basket that hung at the corner of the mantelpiece, and handing it to Maxime; "what does that mean? there are some combs in it."

"His arms are *coupé argent, three combs gules, two and one, alternating with three bunches of grapes purple, stalks and leaves sinople, one and two; below, three feathers or arranged en fret,* with SERVIR for device, and an esquire's helmet. It's no great matter; they were ennobled under Louis XV., they had some haberdasher for an ancestor, the maternal line made a fortune in the wine trade, and the Du Ronceret who got the title was probably a clerk.—But if

you succeed in shaking off Arthur, the Du Roncerets will be barons at the very least, I promise you that, my little fairy. You see, my child, you must lie in pickle five or six years in the provinces if you want to bury La Schontz in Madame la Présidente.—The fellow looks at you with an expression that can have but one meaning; you have him fast—"

"No," replied Aurélie, "when I offered him my hand, he was as calm as the price of eau-de-vie in the bulletin of the Bourse."

"I will undertake to convince him, if he is tipsy —Go and see how far along they are."

"It isn't worth while to go, for I can hear nobody but Bixiou, who is making one of his *charges* to which nobody listens; but I know my Arthur; he feels obliged to be polite to Bixiou, but, even if his eyes are closed, he's looking at him all the same."

"Let us go back, then!—"

"By the way, in whose interest am I to work, Maxime?" asked Madame Schontz, suddenly.

"In Madame de Rochefide's," said Maxime without hesitation; "it is impossible to bring her and Arthur together while you retain your hold on him; with her, it's a question of being at the head of his household, with four hundred thousand francs a year!"

"And she offers me only two hundred thousand francs in all! I must have three hundred, as she is the person interested. Look you, I have taken care of her brat and her husband, I have filled her place in everything; and now she would be stingy with

me! With three hundred thousand from her, my dear fellow, I shall have a million. With that, if you promise that I shall be the wife of the president of the court at Alençon, I might give myself airs as Madame du Ronceret."

"It's agreed," said Maxime.

"How bored I shall be in that little town!" cried Aurélie, philosophically. "I have heard so much about the province from D'Esgrignon and La Val-Noble, that it is as if I had already lived there."

"And suppose I should assure you of the countenance of the nobility?"

"Ah! Maxime, you must tell me so much about the nobility! Ah! yes, but the pigeon may refuse the wing—"

"He is very ugly with his plum-colored skin, he has bristles instead of whiskers, he has the appearance of a wild boar although he has the eyes of a bird of prey. He will make the finest president in the world. Never fear! in ten minutes he will sing you Isabelle's air in the fourth act of *Robert le Diable:* 'I am at your knees!' but will you undertake to send Arthur off to his wife's knees?"

"It will be a hard task, but by trying I shall succeed—"

About half-past ten the guests returned to the salon for their coffee. In the relative positions of Madame Schontz, Couture and Du Ronceret, it is easy to imagine the effect produced upon the ambitious Norman by the following conversation which Maxime had with Couture, in a corner and in

undertones so that nobody should hear, but which Fabien overheard:

"My dear fellow, if you are wise you will accept the receiver-generalship in some distant department, which Madame de Rochefide will procure for you; Aurélie's million will enable you to deposit the necessary security and you would have separate estates on marrying her. You will become a deputy in time if you handle your ship carefully, and the first return I shall ask for having saved you, will be your vote in the Chamber."

"I shall always be proud to be a soldier of yours."

"Ah! my dear fellow, you have had a narrow escape! Just fancy; Aurélie fell in love with that Norman from Alençon, she asked to have him made a baron, president of the court in his town, and an officer of the Legion of Honor. My imbecile didn't know enough to divine Madame Schontz's real worth, and you owe your good fortune to a fit of spite; so don't give the clever creature time to reflect. I will go and put the irons in the fire."

Maxime left Couture overwhelmed with delight, and said to La Palférine:

"Shall I drive you, my son?"

At eleven o'clock Aurélie was left with Couture, Fabien and Rochefide. Arthur was asleep in a reclining-chair, Couture and Fabien were trying, unsuccessfully, to outstay each other. Madame Schontz put an end to the contest with a friendly: "Till tomorrow, my dear!" to Couture, who took it in good part.

"Mademoiselle," said Fabien in an undertone, "if you noticed the abstracted manner with which I received the offer you indirectly made me, I beg you not to believe that it was due to the slightest hesitation on my part; but you don't know my mother —she never would consent to my accepting my good fortune—"

"You have passed the age when a *sommation respectueuse** is necessary, my dear man," retorted Aurélie insolently. "But, if you're afraid of mamma, you're not the man for me."

"Joséphine!" exclaimed The Heir affectionately, passing his right arm boldly around Madame Schontz's waist, "I thought that you loved me?"

"Well, what then?"

"Perhaps I might mollify my mother and obtain more than her consent."

"How, pray?"

"If you would exert your influence—"

"To have you made a baron, officer of the Legion of Honor and president of the court, eh, my son? Look you, I have done so many things in my life that I am capable of virtue! I can be an honest, loyal wife, and carry my husband in tow to a great height; but I must be loved by him so dearly that never a glance or a thought must be diverted from my heart. Do you agree to that?—Don't bind

Sommation respectueuse.—"An extra-judicial act which a young man of twenty-five or a young woman of twenty-one is required to perform, to inform his or her father and mother, or grandfather and grandmother, of his or her intended marriage, and to ask their advice concerning it, when they have not given their consent."—LITTRÉ.

yourself imprudently, for your life is at stake, my dear."

"With a woman like you I drink without looking," said Fabien, intoxicated by her glance as much as by the Curaçoa he had imbibed.

"You shall never repent those words, my pet, you shall be a peer of France.—As for yonder poor old fellow," she added, glancing at the sleeping Rochefide, "it's all u-p, up with him!"

It was so prettily and so well said, that Fabien seized Madame Schontz and kissed her, in an outburst of excitement and joy, in which the double intoxication of love and wine yielded to that of good fortune and ambition.

"Remember, my dear child," said she, "to behave in a becoming manner with your wife from this time forth; don't play the lover, and let me extricate myself with propriety from my mud puddle. Think of Couture, imagining himself a rich man and receiver-general!"

"I have a horror of that man," said Fabien, "I wish I need never see him again."

"I won't receive him any more," said the courtesan, with a prudish air. "Now that we are agreed, my Fabien, you must go; it's one o'clock."

This little scene gave birth, in the household of Aurélie and Arthur, hitherto so perfectly peaceful and happy, to the phase of domestic warfare which is brought about at all firesides by the existence of a secret interest on the part of one of the partners.

The very next day Arthur awoke alone, and found

Madame Schontz as cold as such women can be on occasion.

"What happened last night?" he asked, looking at Aurélie as they sat at breakfast.

"That's the way it is in Paris," she said. "We go to sleep in damp weather, and the next day the pavements are dry and everything is frozen so hard that the dust blows; would you like a brush?—"

"Why, what's the matter with you, my dear little love?"

"Go back to your great awkward hussy of a wife—"

"My wife?" cried the poor marquis.

"Don't I guess why you brought Maxime here? You want to patch up a reconciliation with Madame de Rochefide, who needs you perhaps on account of some inopportune brat—And I, whom you are always calling so clever, advised you to give her back her fortune! Oh! I see your plan! after five years, monsieur is tired of me. I am getting fat and Béatrix is bony; that's what makes you change. You're not the first man I have known with a taste for skeletons. Your Béatrix dresses well, too, and you are one of the men who like cloak-hangers. Then you want to get Monsieur du Guénic sent away. That will be a triumph! That will put you in a very fine light. How people will talk about it! you'll be a downright hero!"

Madame Schontz had not ceased her railing at two o'clock in the afternoon, despite Arthur's protestations. She said that she was invited out to dinner.

She requested her unfaithful swain to go from her house to the *Italiens*, saying that she was going to a first night at the *Ambigu-Comique*, where she was to meet a charming woman, Madame de la Baudraye, Lousteau's mistress. Arthur proposed, as a proof of his undying attachment to his little Aurélie and of his aversion for his wife, to start the next day for Italy, and to live with her as her husband at Rome, Naples, Florence, wherever she chose, offering her as a gift sixty thousand francs a year.

"That's all fudge," said she. "That won't prevent you from making up with your wife, and it's the best thing you can do."

Arthur and Aurélie parted after this ominous dialogue, he, to go and dine and play at the club, she, to dress and pass the evening tête-à-tête with Fabien.

Monsieur de Rochefide found Maxime at the club and complained to him, like a man who felt that a felicity whose roots were twined about all the fibres of his heart, was being uprooted. Maxime listened to the marquis's lamentations, as courteous people can listen while thinking of something entirely different.

"I am a good adviser in such matters as this, my good friend," he said. "In the first place, you are taking the wrong tack in allowing Aurélie to see how dear she is to you. Let me present you to Madame Antonia. There's a heart to let. You will see La Schontz sing a very different tune. She is thirty-seven, is your Schontz, and Madame Antonia

is not more than twenty-six! and such a woman! all her sense is not in her head, I promise you!—Moreover, she is my pupil. If Madame Schontz continues to ride a high horse, do you know what that will mean?"

"Faith, I do not."

"It may mean that she proposes to marry, and in that case nothing can prevent her leaving you. After a six years' lease, the woman certainly has the right to do it. But, if you care to follow my advice, there's a still better course for you to follow. Your wife to-day is a thousand times better than all the Schontzes and Antonias in Quartier Saint-Georges. It's a difficult conquest to make, but it's not impossible and she would make you as happy as an Orgon! At all events, if you don't want to appear like an idiot, you must come and take supper at Antonia's to-night."

"No, I care too much for Aurélie; I don't propose to give her the slightest excuse for reproaching me."

"Ah! my dear man, what a life you are preparing for yourself!" cried Maxime.

"It is eleven o'clock; she must have returned from the *Ambigu*," said Rochefide, taking his leave.

And he shouted fiercely to his coachman to drive at full speed to Rue de la Bruyère.

Madame Schontz had given precise instructions, and monsieur was allowed to enter just as if there were a perfect understanding between himself and

madame; but, when she was advised of monsieur's return, madame arranged matters so that monsieur should hear the noise made by her dressing-room door closing as doors close when women are taken by surprise. In addition, Fabien's hat, which had been purposely forgotten and left on a corner of the piano, was very awkwardly removed by the maid, just as the interview between monsieur and madame began.

"Haven't you been to the *Ambigu*, darling?"

"No, my dear, I changed my mind; I have been playing the piano."

"Who has been to call on you?" said the marquis affably, as he saw the maid carry away the hat.

"Why, no one."

At that unblushing falsehood, Arthur hung his head; he was passing under the Caudine Forks of complaisance. True love has its cowardice. Arthur behaved with Madame Schontz as Sabine did with Calyste and Calyste with Béatrix.

*

Within a week, a metamorphosis as complete as that from chrysalis to butterfly took place in the clever and handsome young Charles-Edouard, Comte Rusticoli de la Palférine, the hero of the *Scene* entitled *A Prince of Bohemia*,—See SCENES OF PARISIAN LIFE,—which fact relieves us from the necessity of drawing his portrait and describing his character here. Hitherto he had lived in wretched fashion, piling up debts with Danton-like audacity; but now he paid his debts, he procured, in accordance with Maxime's advice, a little low carriage, he was admitted to the Jockey Club and to the club on Rue de Grammont, he became ultra-fashionable; and lastly, he published a short story in the *Journal des Débats* which gave him in a few days such a reputation as professional authors do not obtain after years of hard work and success; for nothing rages so fiercely at Paris as that which is destined to be ephemeral.

Nathan, who was very certain that the count would never publish anything of importance, spoke in such laudatory terms of this charming and impertinent young man at Madame de Rochefide's, that that lady, spurred on by the poet's eulogy, manifested a desire to see this youthful king of the fashionable vagabonds of the day.

"He will be all the more enchanted to come here,"

said Nathan, "because, as I happen to know, he is so madly in love with you that he would do any crazy thing under heaven."

"But he has already done everything there is to do, so I hear."

"Everything? No," rejoined Nathan, "he hasn't yet fallen in love with a virtuous woman."

Some few days after the plot formed upon Boulevard des Italiens by Maxime and the fascinating Comte Charles-Édouard, that young man, to whom nature had given, in jest, doubtless, a deliciously melancholy face, made his first incursion into the nest of the white dove on Rue de Courcelles, who chose an evening to receive him when Calyste was obliged to perform some social duty with his wife. When you meet La Palférine, or when you reach *A Prince of Bohemia*, in the third Book of this long history of our manners, you will understand perfectly the success achieved in a single evening by that sparkling wit, by that incredible animation, especially if you form a just idea of the skilful manœuvring of the showman, who consented to assist him upon this occasion. Nathan was a good fellow; he brought out the young count's brilliant points, as a jeweler, exhibiting his wares, holds them so that the diamonds will catch the light.

La Palférine discreetly left the house first; he left Nathan and the marchioness together, relying upon the collaboration of the famous author, who played his part to admiration. Seeing that the marchioness was fairly bewildered, he kindled a fire

in her heart by eloquent reticences which stirred fibres of curiosity within her, of whose existence she had no idea. Nathan gave her to understand also that La Palférine's success with women was due not so much to his wit as to his superiority in the art of love, and he exaggerated it beyond measure.

This is a fitting place to call attention to a novel result of the great law of contrasts which determines many crises in the human heart and explains so many eccentricities, that we are compelled to remember it sometimes as well as the law of similitudes. Courtesans—to embrace the whole class of females who are baptized, unbaptized and rebaptized every quarter of a century—all retain at the bottom of their hearts a constantly increasing desire to recover their liberty, to love purely, nobly and piously a man to whom they sacrifice everything. —See *Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans.* They feel that antithetical need so forcibly, that it is a rare thing to meet one of these women who has not more than once aspired to attain virtue by way of love. They do not lose courage although they are shockingly deceived. On the other hand, women who are held in check by their education, by their social position, enchained by the nobility of their family, living in the bosom of opulence and wearing a halo of virtue, are attracted, in secret of course, toward the tropical regions of love. These two feminine natures, so sharply contrasted, have, therefore, at the bottom of their hearts, the one a

craving for virtue, the other that slight tendency to libertinage which Jean-Jacques Rousseau first had the courage to point out. In the one case, it is the last reflection of the divine ray that is not yet extinct; in the other, the last remnant of our primitive filth.

This last claw of the beast was sharpened, this particular hair in the devil's head was pulled by Nathan with consummate skill. The marchioness began to wonder in good earnest if, hitherto, she had not been the dupe of her own brain, if her education was complete.

Vice!—perhaps it is simply the desire to know everything. The next day, Calyste appeared to Béatrix in his true light; a loyal, perfect gentleman, but devoid of spirit or wit. At Paris, a man to be called clever, should be supplied with wit as fountains are with water, for men of the world and Parisian men are, as a general rule, clever; but Calyste loved too dearly, he was too thoroughly absorbed by his love, to notice the change in Béatrix and to amend matters by displaying fresh resources; he seemed very pale in the reflection of the preceding evening, and did not arouse the slightest emotion in the famished Béatrix.

A great love is equivalent to giving unlimited credit to such a voracious force that the moment of bankruptcy always comes at last. Despite the weariness of that day—the day when a woman feels bored to death with a lover!—Béatrix shuddered with fear at the thought of a meeting between La Palférine, the successor of Maxime de Trailles, and

Calyste, a man of courage wholly devoid of bravado. She hesitated, therefore, about seeing the young count again; but the knot was cut in a decisive fashion.

Béatrix had taken a third of a dark box on the lower tier at the *Italiens*, in order not to be seen. For some days past, Calyste had boldly escorted the marchioness to the theatre and stationed himself behind her in the box, arranging to arrive so late that no one would see them. Béatrix went out among the first, before the end of the last act, and Calyste followed her at a distance, keeping watch upon her although old Antoine came to drive his mistress home. Maxime and La Palférine observed this strategy, inspired by respect for the proprieties, by that need of concealment which distinguishes the idolaters of the Eternal Child, and also by the fear that weighs upon all women who were once planets in the social world, but whom love has caused to abdicate their places in the zodiac. Humiliation is then dreaded as a suffering more cruel than death; but this agony of pride, this affront, which women who have retained their rank in Olympus hurl down at those who have fallen, took place under most shocking conditions, through the efforts of Maxime.

At a performance of *Lucia*, which ends, as everyone knows, in one of Rubini's most notable triumphs, Madame de Rochefide, whom Antoine had not notified of his arrival, reached the peristyle of the theatre from her corridor, when the stairways

were crowded with pretty women, standing one above another on the stairs or grouped at the foot, waiting for their servants to announce their carriages. Béatrix was recognized by all eyes at once, and there was a general whispering among the various groups. In the twinkling of an eye, the crowd melted away, and the marchioness was left alone like a plague-stricken creature.

Calyste, seeing his wife on one of the stairways, did not dare to join the culprit, and twice Béatrix vainly begged him to come to her by a piteous glance from eyes that were wet with tears. At that moment, La Palférine, fashionably dressed, superb, fascinating, left two ladies with whom he was talking, went up to the marchioness, bowed politely and began to talk with her.

"Take my arm and leave the theatre with head erect," said he; "I can find your carriage."

"Will you come and pass the rest of the evening with me?" she answered, entering her carriage and making room for him by her side.

"Follow madame's carriage!" La Palférine said to his groom, as he took his place beside Béatrix, to the stupefaction of Calyste, who stood rooted to the ground as if his legs were made of lead; for it was the sight of his pale, horror-stricken face that led Béatrix to ask the young count to accompany her. All doves are Robespierres with white feathers.

Three carriages drove to Rue de Courcelles with startling rapidity; Calyste's, La Palférine's and Madame de Rochefide's.

"Ah! you here?" said Béatrix, entering her salon leaning on the young count's arm and finding Calyste there, his horse having outstripped the others.

"So you know monsieur, do you?" Calyste demanded fiercely.

"Monsieur le Comte de la Palférine was presented to me ten days ago by Nathan," replied Béatrix, "and you, monsieur, have known me four years."

"And I am ready, madame," said Charles-Edouard, "to visit Madame la Marquise d'Espard's sins upon her grandchildren to the third and fourth generation, for she was the first to move away from you—"

"Ah! it was *she!*" cried Béatrix; "I will be even with her for that."

"To avenge you, we must reconquer your husband; but I am capable of bringing him back to you," said the young man in her ear.

The conversation thus begun, lasted until two o'clock in the morning, nor did Calyste, whose frenzy was constantly forced back by Béatrix's glances, obtain an opportunity to say two words to her aside. La Palférine, who did not love Béatrix, was as superior to the average man in good taste, wit and grace of manner, as Calyste was inferior in all those qualities. The Breton twisted about on the chair like a worm cut in two, and rose to his feet three times to strike La Palférine. The third time that Calyste made a spring toward his rival, the young count greeted him with an: "Aren't you feeling well, Monsieur le Baron?" that drove

Calyste back to his chair, where he sat like a stone post. The marchioness conversed with the self-possession of a Célimène, pretending not to know that Calyste was there. La Palférine showed the most consummate adroitness by taking his departure with an extremely witty remark, leaving the lovers at odds.

Thus, by Maxime's address, the torch of discord was blazing in the secondary establishments of both Monsieur and Madame de Rochefide.

The next day, upon learning of the success of this scene from La Palférine at the Jockey Club, where the young count was playing whist with much success, Maxime repaired to the Hôtel Schontz on Rue de la Bruyère, to ascertain how Aurélie was handling her vessel.

"My dear," laughed Madame Schontz when Maxime appeared, "I am at the end of all my expedients. Rochefide is incurable. I bring my career of gallantry to a close with the discovery that intelligence is a drawback."

"Explain that remark."

"In the first place, my dear friend, I kept my Arthur for a week on a diet of kicks in the bones of the leg, of the most patriotic vexations, and of all the most disagreeable things we know in our trade. 'You must be ill,' he would say with fatherly gentleness, 'for I have never been anything but kind to you, and I love you to adoration.'—'You are wrong, my dear,' I answered, 'you bore me.'—'Very well, don't you have the cleverest men and the smartest

youngsters in Paris to amuse you?' the poor fellow replied. I was silenced. I felt then that I loved him."

"Aha!" said Maxime.

"What would you have? it's stronger than we are; we can't resist such things as that. I changed my tune and began to make eyes at my judicial wild boar, my future spouse, changed like Arthur into a sheep; I made him sit there on Rochefide's couch, and I found him a great idiot. How bored I was! but I had to have Fabien there in order to be surprised with him."

"Well, well," cried Maxime, "come to the point then—Well, when Rochefide surprised you—?"

"You are not in it, my good man. According to your instructions, the banns are published, our contract is being drawn, so Notre-Dame de Lorette has nothing to say. When there has been a promise of marriage, it's all right to give earnest money. When he surprised Fabien and me, poor Arthur stole out into the dining-room on tip-toe and began to go *Broum! broum!* coughing and knocking chairs about. That great clown of a Fabien was afraid, for I can't tell him everything—

'And at that point, dear Maxime, the matter now rests—'

If Arthur should find two of us some morning on coming into my room, he is quite capable of saying: 'Have you passed a comfortable night, my children?'"

Maxime shook his head and played with his cane for some moments.

"I have heard of such characters," he said. "This is the way we must deal with them; there is nothing left for us to do but to throw Arthur out of the window and lock the door. When will you repeat your last scene with Fabien?"

"That's too much! for the sacrament hasn't yet given us its sanction."

"You will place yourself so that you can exchange a glance with Arthur when he takes you by surprise again," Maxime continued; "if he is angry, that's all we want. If he says: *Broum! broum!* again, why there's a still better way of ending it—"

"How?"

"Why, you must lose your temper and say: 'I thought that you had some affection and esteem for me; but you haven't any feeling for me at all; you are not even jealous'—you know the story! 'In such a case, Maxime'—you can bring me in—'would kill his man on the spot'—weep a little here.—'And Fabien'—put him to shame by comparing him to Fabien—'Fabien, whom I love, would draw a dagger and plunge it into your heart. Ah! that is true love! So, adieu, good-night, take back your house, I propose to marry Fabien, *he* will give me his name! he tramples on his old mother!—' In short, you must—"

"I see! I see! I will be superb!" cried Madame Schontz. "Ah! Maxime, there will never be but one Maxime, as there is only one De Marsay."

"La Palférine is greater than I am," said the Comte de Trailles modestly; "he is going on finely."

"He has the tongue, but you have the wrist and the loins! How much you have endured! how you have held your own!" said La Schontz.

"La Palférine has everything; he is very deep and well-informed; while I am ignorant," replied Maxime.—"I saw Rastignac, who at once arranged matters with the Keeper of the Seals; Fabien will be appointed president, and officer of the Legion of Honor after a year's probation."

"I will turn pious!" Madame Schontz rejoined, emphasizing the words in a way that brought forth a nod of approval from Maxime.

"Priests are worth more than we are," he replied.

"Ah! indeed?" said Madame Schontz. "Then I may meet somebody I can talk to in the provinces. I have begun my rôle. Fabien has already told his mother that the divine grace has illumined my mind, and he has fascinated the excellent soul with my million and the title of Madame la Présidente; she consents to let us live with her, she has asked for my portrait and has sent me hers: if Love should glance at it he would fall—backwards! Away with you, Maxime; to-night I am going to execute my poor man, and it breaks my heart."

Two days later, Charles-Édouard said to Maxime, as they met in the doorway of the Jockey Club:

"It is done!"

That sentence, which contained a whole ghastly,

terrifying drama, often performed for revenge, made the Comte de Trailles smile.

"We are about to hear Rochefide's lamentations," said Maxime, "for you and Aurélie have accomplished your objects simultaneously! Aurélie has turned Arthur out of doors and now we must take charge of him; he must give Madame du Ronceret three hundred thousand francs and return to his wife; we have to prove to him that Béatrix is superior to Aurélie."

"We have a good ten days before us," said Charles-Édouard in a meaning tone, "and that is none too much in all conscience; for, now that I know the marchioness, the poor man shall be handsomely plucked."

"What will you do when the bomb bursts?"

"Presence of mind always comes when one has time to seek it, and I am especially superb in preparing myself to meet emergencies."

The two gamblers entered the salon together and found the Marquis de Rochefide apparently two years older; he had not put on his corsets and had sacrificed the pride of his heart, his long beard.

"Well, my dear marquis?"—said Maxime.

"Ah! my dear fellow, my life is ruined."

Arthur talked for ten minutes and Maxime listened to him with a sober face; he was thinking of his wedding, which was to take place within the week.

"My dear Arthur, I suggested to you the only method I knew of keeping Aurélie and you wouldn't accept the suggestion."

"What was that?"

"Didn't I advise you to go and sup with Antonia?"

"You did—But what was I to do? I really love Aurélie,—and you make love as Grisier fences."

"Hark ye, Arthur; give her three hundred thousand francs for her little house, and I will undertake to find you a better woman than she is.—I'll talk to you later about the fair unknown, I see D'Ajuda coming to speak to me."

And Maxime left the inconsolable lover to meet the representative of a family that needed consolation.

"My dear fellow," said the other marquis in Maxime's ear, "the duchess is in despair. Calyste has had his trunks packed secretly and has taken a passport. Sabine insists upon following the fugitives, taking Béatrix by surprise and clawing her eyes out. She is *enceinte*, and it begins to look decidedly like a murderous purpose on her part, as she has purchased pistols openly."

"Tell the duchess that Madame de Rochefide won't go, and that it will be all over in a fortnight. Now, D'Ajuda, your hand. Neither you nor I have ever said a word or known anything of this matter! we will look on admiringly at the hazards of life!"

"The duchess has already made me swear on the Gospel and the crucifix to hold my tongue."

"You will receive my wife a month hence?"

"With pleasure."

"Everybody will be satisfied," said Maxime.

"But advise the duchess of one little circumstance that will delay her journey to Italy for six weeks; it's something that concerns Monsieur du Guénic—you will know later."

"What is it?" said D'Ajuda, glancing at La Palférine.

"Socrates remarked before setting out: 'We owe a cock to Æsculapius;' but your brother-in-law will be let off for the comb," said La Palférine without winking.

*

For ten days, Calyste was crushed under the weight of a wrath that was the more implacable because it was increased tenfold by a genuine passion. Béatrix had fallen a victim to the love so brutally but so faithfully described to the Duchesse de Grandlieu by Maxime de Trailles. It may be said that there are no well-organized beings who do not experience that terrible passion once in the course of their lives. The marchioness felt that she was subjugated by a superior force, by a young man who was not awed by her rank, who, being as nobly born as she, watched her with a calm, overbearing eye, and from whom her most determined efforts as a woman could with difficulty extort an approving smile. In a word, she was oppressed by a tyrant who never parted from her that he did not leave her weeping, wounded and believing that she had been wronged.

Charles-Édouard played the same comedy with Béatrix that Béatrix had been playing for six months with Calyste. Since her public humiliation at the *Italiens*, Béatrix had never swerved from this proposition to Monsieur du Guénic:

"You preferred society and your wife to me, therefore you do not love me. If you want to convince me that you do love me, sacrifice your wife

and society to me. Abandon Sabine and let us go to Switzerland, Italy or Germany to live!"

Basing her action upon this harsh ultimatum, she had established a blockade as women do, with cold looks, disdainful gestures and the frowning aspect of a fortress. She thought that she was free from Calyste, for she did not believe that he would dare break with the Grandlieus. To leave Sabine, to whom Mademoiselle des Touches had given her fortune, would be to assume the burden of poverty, would it not? But Calyste, wild with despair, had secretly taken passports, and had written to his mother, asking her to send him a considerable sum. Pending the arrival of the funds, he watched Béatrix, the victim of Breton jealousy in all its fury.

At last, nine days after La Palférine's momentous communication to Maxime at the club, the baron, to whom his mother had sent thirty thousand francs, rushed to Béatrix's house with the intention of forcing the blockade, expelling La Palférine and leaving Paris with his appeased idol. It was one of those terrible crises, when women who have preserved some little self-respect plunge into the depths of vice forever; in rare instances only do they return to a virtuous life. Hitherto Madame de Rochefide had esteemed herself a virtuous woman into whose heart two passions had entered; but to allow herself to be made love to by Calyste while she adored Charles-Édouard would be to forfeit her own esteem; for where falsehood begins, infamy begins. She had given Calyste rights over

her and no human power could prevent the Breton from throwing himself at her feet and watering them with the tears of absolute repentance.

Many people wonder at the frigid insensibility with which women extinguish their passions; but, if they did not thus efface the past, life would be without dignity for them, they could never resist the fatal familiarity to which they had once submitted. In the entirely novel situation in which she found herself, Béatrix would have been saved if La Palférine had come; but old Antoine's shrewdness was her undoing.

Hearing a carriage stop at the door, she said to Calyste:

"Some one is coming!"

And she hurried to the door to prevent a scene.

Antoine, like the prudent serving-man he was, said to Charles-Édouard, who had come for no other purpose than to hear those very words:

"Madame la Marquise has gone out!"

When Béatrix learned from her old servant who the visitor was and what answer he had given him, she said: "Very well!" and returned to the salon, saying to herself:

"I will turn nun!"

Calyste, who had taken the liberty of opening the window, caught sight of his rival.

"Who came?" he asked.

"I don't know; Antoine is still downstairs."

"It was La Palférine—"

"That may be—"

"You love him and that is why you are constantly finding fault with me. I saw him!"

"You saw him?"

"I opened the window—"

Béatrix fell upon her couch like a dead woman. Then she paltered with her conscience in order to have a to-morrow in which to set matters straight; she postponed their departure a week on the pretext of important business, and took an oath to herself to forbid Calyste her door if she could appease La Palférine, for such are the ghastly intrigues and burning anguish concealed in such lives as these, that have left the rails upon which the great social fabric runs.

When Béatrix was alone, she was so wretched, so profoundly humiliated, that she went to bed: she was ill; the violent contest that had torn her heart seemed to her to be followed by a horrible reaction, and she sent for her doctor; but, at the same time, she sent La Palférine the following note, in which she took her revenge upon Calyste with a species of frenzy:

"Come to see me, my friend; I am in despair, Antoine turned you away when your appearance would have put an end to one of the most horrible nightmares of my life, by delivering me from a man I hate and whom, I trust, I shall never see again. I love no one in the world but you, and I shall never love any but you, although I am unfortunate enough not to please you as I would like to do—"

She wrote four pages which, after this beginning, concluded with an exalted peroration much too

poetic to be put in type, in which she compromised herself so completely that she brought it to a close with: "Am I sufficiently at your mercy? Ah! nothing would cost me too much to prove to you how dear you are to me!" And she signed her name, something that she had never done for Calyste or for Conti.

The next day, when the young count called upon the marchioness, she was in her bath, and Antoine requested him to wait. In his turn, he caused Calyste to be turned away,—for the young Breton came early, starving for love,—and, from the window, watched him enter his carriage in desperation.

"Ah! Charles," said the marchioness as she entered the salon, "you have ruined me!"

"I am well aware of it, madame," rejoined La Palférine, calmly. "You have sworn to me that you loved me alone, you have offered to give me a letter setting forth the reasons you have for killing yourself, so that in case of your infidelity I might poison you without having anything to fear from human justice, as if men of superior mould needed to resort to poison to revenge themselves. You wrote to me: 'Nothing would cost me too much to prove to you how dear you are to me!'—Do you know I detect a contradiction to the concluding words of your letter in that phrase: *You have ruined me!*—I shall know now whether you have had the courage to break with Du Guénic—"

"Ah! you had your revenge on him beforehand," she said, throwing her arms around his neck.

"And, as a result of this affair, you and I are bound together forever."

"Madame," rejoined the Prince of Bohemia coldly, "if you wish me for a friend, I consent; but on condition—"

"Conditions?"

"Yes, on these conditions. You will be reconciled to Monsieur de Rochefide, you will recover the honorable position to which you are entitled, you will return to your fine house on Rue d'Anjou, you will become one of the queens of Paris; you can do it by making Rochefide play a part in politics, and by displaying in your conduct the same shrewdness and persistence as Madame d'Espard has exhibited. That is the situation a woman should occupy upon whom I confer the honor of giving myself to her—"

"But you forget that Monsieur de Rochefide's consent is necessary."

"Oh! my dear child," said La Palférine, "we have prepared him for you; I have pledged him my faith as a gentleman that you are worth all the Schontzes in Quartier Saint-Georges, and you owe it to my honor—"

Every day for a week Calyste called upon Béatrix, only to be turned away by Antoine, who assumed an expression prepared for the occasion, to say: "Madame la Marquise is dangerously ill." Thence Calyste drove to La Palférine's, whose valet replied: "Monsieur is hunting!" Each time the Breton left a letter for La Palférine.

On the eighth day, Calyste, summoned to an

explanation by a line from La Palférine, found him at last, but he was accompanied by Maxime de Trailles, to whom, doubtless, the younger rake wished to demonstrate his cunning by allowing him to witness this scene.

"Monsieur le Baron," said Charles-Edouard calmly, "here are the six letters you have done me the honor to write me; they are intact and whole; the seals have not been broken, for I knew beforehand what they probably contained, having learned that you have been looking for me everywhere since the day I watched you from a window when you were at the door of a house, of which, on the preceding day, you were at the window and I at the door. It seemed to me that I ought to ignore unseemly insults. Between ourselves, you have too much good taste to wish a woman ill because she has ceased to love you. It's a wretched way of winning back her love, to seek a quarrel with your favored rival. But, under the existing circumstances, your letters were tainted with a radical defect—a *nullity* as the lawyers say. You have too much good sense to bear a husband a grudge for taking back his wife. Monsieur de Rochefide has felt that his wife's position lacked dignity. You will no longer find Madame de Rochefide on Rue de Courcelles, six months hence —next winter, let us say, but at the Hôtel de Rochefide. You thrust yourself very inconsiderately into the midst of a reconciliation between the husband and wife, of which you, yourself, were the original cause by not rescuing Madame de Rochefide from

the humiliation to which she was subjected at the *Italiens.* When we left the theatre, Béatrix, to whom I had already been the bearer of some friendly propositions from her husband, took me in her carriage, and her first words at that time were: 'Go and find Arthur!'—"

"My God!" cried Calyste, "she was right; I failed in my devotion."

"Unluckily, monsieur, poor Arthur was living with one of those atrocious creatures, La Schontz, who knew that she was in hourly danger of being deserted. Madame Schontz, who, on the strength of Béatrix's complexion, cherished the hope of seeing herself some day Marquise de Rochefide, was terribly enraged when she found her castles in Spain razed to the ground, and she determined to be revenged upon the husband and wife at a single blow! Those women, monsieur, will put out one of their own eyes for the sake of putting out both of their enemy's; La Schontz, who has left Paris, has put out six!—And if I had been imprudent enough to love Béatrix, she would have had eight to her credit.—You must have noticed that you need the attention of an oculist—"

Maxime could not restrain a smile at the change in Calyste's face which turned as pale as death when his eyes were opened to the plight he was in.

"Would you believe, Monsieur le Baron, that that despicable woman has given her hand to the man who furnished her with the means of revenge?—

Oh! these women!—You understand, now, why Béatrix has gone into retirement for a few months with Arthur at Nogent-sur-Marne, where they have a delightful little house; they are recovering their sight there. During their absence, their hotel is to be refurnished and renovated throughout, and the marchioness intends to maintain a princely establishment there. When one loves sincerely so noble, so grand, so gracious a woman as she, the victim of conjugal love at the moment that she has the courage to return to her duties, the part for them to play who adore her as you adore her, who admire her as I admire her, is to remain her friends, when they can no longer be anything more than friends. —You will be good enough to pardon me if I thought it my duty to request Monsieur le Comte de Trailles to be present as a witness at this interview; but I was determined to set this whole matter before you plainly. As to myself, I desire especially to tell you that, although I may admire Madame de Rochefide's intellect, she is extremely disagreeable to me as a woman."

"And this is how our sweetest dreams, our celestial passions end!" said Calyste, crushed to earth by such a multitude of revelations and such complete disillusionment.

"In a fish's tail," cried Maxime, "or, what is worse, in a druggist's phial! I never heard of a first love that didn't end in some foolish way. Ah! Monsieur le Baron, whatever man may have that is celestial finds no nourishment except in Heaven!

—That is the satisfaction we *roués* have. I have thought very deeply on this question, monsieur, as you can see, for I was married yesterday; I shall be faithful to my wife, and I urge you to return to Madame du Guénic—but—not for three months. Do not regret Béatrix; she is the type of the vain, spiritless creatures, who are flirts through vainglory; she is Madame d'Espard without her profound tact, the heartless, brainless woman, who wanders giddily into evil. Madame de Rochefide loves only Madame de Rochefide; she would have embroiled you beyond remedy with Madame du Guénic, and would have thrown you over without remorse; in short, she is as incomplete in vice as in virtue."

"I don't agree with you, Maxime," said La Palférine; "she will be the most delightful hostess in Paris."

Calyste did not take his leave without exchanging a cordial grasp of the hand with Charles-Edouard and Maxime de Trailles, thanking them for disposing of his illusions.

Three days later, the Duchesse de Grandlieu, who had not seen her daughter Sabine since the morning of the conference just described, went to her house and found Calyste in his bath and Sabine beside him working upon articles for the layette of the expected newcomer.

"Well, well, what has happened to you, my children?" queried the good duchess.

"Nothing but good things, dear mamma," Sabine

replied, raising her eyes, beaming with happiness, to her mother's face; "we have played the fable of the *Two Pigeons!* that is all.

Calyste took his wife's hand and pressed it tenderly.

1838–1844.

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